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*Ancient customs, sports, and  
pastimes, of the English*

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ANCIENT  
CUSTOMS, SPORTS,  
AND  
PASTIMES, OF THE ENGLISH;  
EXPLAINED FROM  
AUTHENTIC SOURCES, & IN A FAMILIAR MANNER.

By J ASPIN, Esq.

---

WITH TWELVE ENGRAVINGS.

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LONDON:  
JOHN HARRIS, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.  
1832.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE manners of a people, like the fashion of their garments, are liable to frequent change: the polite observances of yesterday are deemed vulgar to-day; and the most popular pursuits of one generation are sometimes neglected by the generation which succeeds it. Imperfect remains of ancient usages are yet discoverable in the customs of our own times; but the cause for such observances having ceased, to many persons, and to young people especially, these forms are without meaning.



The information conveyed in the following pages is selected from the writings of the most approved authors on this subject; and, it is hoped, the readers of our "Little Library" may experience pleasure and profit by contrasting the manners of their ancestors, in times long since past, with the prevailing fashions and pursuits of their countrymen of the present day.

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# ENGLISH

## SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

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SUPPOSING my young friends to be well enough read in English history, to know that this our favourite island has been successively in the possession of Britons, Romans, Saxons, Danes, Normans, and that the English is a mixed race, deduced from some or all of these, I need but briefly run over the characteristics of each people, leaving their political history for the study of other seasons. Remains of these characteristics will be found in different

parts of the country, in various degrees, according as one or other of these people settled in larger or less proportions to the rest of the inhabitants; hence a considerable diversity of manners, and even of dialect, in the several counties of England.

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## THE BRITONS.

THE Britons were brave, noble, and courageous; fond of liberty, but incapable of maintaining the independence they sought, from their jealousy of each other. Hence the petty tribes, into which they were divided, were continually in a state of hostility towards each other; so that for want of cordiality among themselves, they were incapable of repelling

such potent invaders as the Romans, by whom the whole were subjugated.

Each tribe of the Britons had its king, or queen; for females succeeded to the crown as well as men; under whom were several chieftains, clothed with subordinate authority. As it was an important part of the regal office to have the command in war, we find queens as well as kings leading their armies to battle.

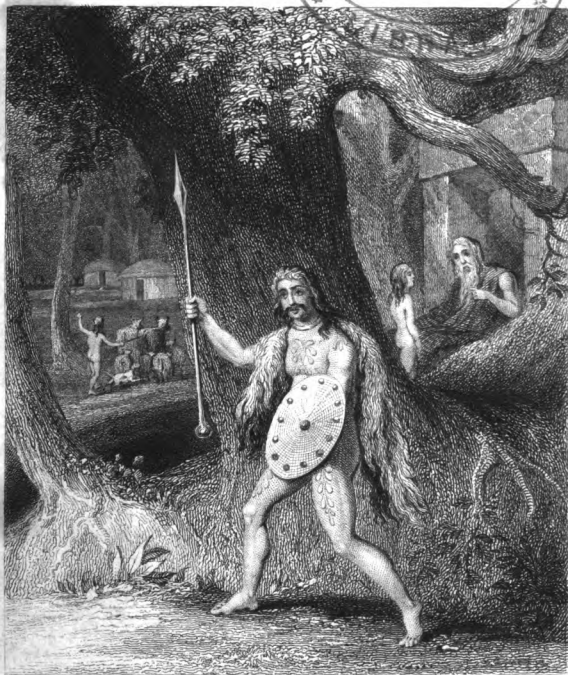
The right of making laws, as well as of explaining them, was vested in the Druids, or priests, to whom the greatest deference was paid, and whose power was very extensive. To them was consigned the tuition of youth; and it was not customary for the son to be seen with his father, till he was able to bear arms. The Druids performed their religious rites in groves of oaks; and they paid particu-



lar regard to the mistletoe growing upon such trees. The mysteries of their religion, which required human sacrifices, were only communicated to such as had previously bound themselves by dreadful oaths never to reveal what they were taught.

Besides the Druids, there was an inferior order of priests, called Bards, who were remarkable for relating, in extemporaneous verse, the actions of their kings and heroes, accompanied with music.

In their persons, the Britons were above the ordinary height; yet not so well made as their neighbours, the Gauls. They were simple and upright in their dealings, rough in their manners, and satisfied with the most frugal aliments, the bark and roots of trees occasionally serving them as diet. Those who dwelt on the southern coast threw over their shoulders the



*2 Ancient Indians.*

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skin of some beast, which they had killed in the chase; those in the interior went altogether naked: both stained their bodies of a sky-blue colour, and painted themselves in various devices. They wore their long hair hanging down over their shoulders, and shaved all other parts of the body, except the upper lip. About their necks, and round their waists, they wore rings of iron, or brass, to denote their quality, or wealth. In a later period, after they had been subjugated by the Romans, who taught them many of the arts of refined life, the Britons on the coasts of Kent, Devon, and Cornwall, who wished to be thought genteel and polite, wore long black garments reaching to their ankles, and carried large staves in their hands. Some are also described as wearing robes, one of which, consisting of a thick hairy garment, was called by the Bri-

tons *gaunacum*, the origin, as some suppose, of the modern term *gown*.

A thick wood, surrounded with a ditch and rampire of earth, constituted a British town, within which they built huts, or cottages, for themselves, and stalls for their cattle. The walls of the former consisted of hurdles, plastered over with mud, and the roof was thatched with reeds or straw.

The boats of the Britons were of a very slight construction: the keels and ribs were made of some light wood, covered over with leather. In these, and similar vessels, they would venture out to sea, and even undertake the rough and boisterous passage to Ireland. As they took no provision with them, but fasted all the time they were out, it is evident they could not hazard any long voyages.

The Phœnicians and Greeks traded with them ; and in return for their tin and lead, brought earthen pots, brazen ware, &c. They had no coined money, but used pieces of brass and iron tallies, of a certain weight.



The arms of the Britons consisted of a dart, or javelin, which they threw from their war chariots, and a short spear used by those who fought on foot ; the latter had a bell at its lower end, which was shaken with great violence at the onset of the battle, to intimidate the enemy. Besides these, they also used large swords, and small bucklers. But their greatest peculiarity lay in their war chariots, which, however, were not universal in Britain ; certain tribes, or clans, only using them. Some of these were armed with hooks and scythes, set into the extremities of the axletrees ; and when driven furiously among the enemy, they frequently broke their ranks ; though by an expert manœuvre of opening the ranks suddenly as they approached, they were sometimes allowed to pass into the rear, and in such cases the drivers were generally cap-

tured or slain. Yet this was not very common ; for, by constant practice, they were so expert in the management of these chariots, that they could stop their horses when at full speed down a steep hill, or check and turn them in the narrowest compass. The chieftain managed the reins, while his dependents fought from the chariots, discharging his darts as he drove along, running along the pole to assail an adversary, and returning to his place with incredible celerity.

Such were the Britons, when the Romans first invaded Britain, who, notwithstanding their renown for military exploits, their knowledge of the art of war, and the superiority of their weapons and means of defence, found in these rude islanders no despicable foe ; many battles were fought, and much treachery was resorted to, before they could obtain the



mastery. During the four hundred and fifty years that the Romans kept them in subjection, the Britons, in learning the arts of civilization became so enervated, that, when left to themselves, they could not withstand the fierce attacks of their northern neighbours : the Romans had abandoned them : and those very people, whom their forefathers had bravely opposed, they entreated to return for their defence. The affairs of the Romans would not admit of this ; and the Britons, in despair, invited over the Saxons from Germany. The Saxons came ; they quickly made the northern tribes retire within their own borders ; and now the Britons expected to live at ease. But they soon found themselves despised and oppressed by their new friends as much as they could have been by their former enemies. The Saxons resolved to have the country for

themselves; and the Britons, incapable of resisting, were glad to flee for refuge into the mountainous parts of Cornwall and Wales; in the last of which they still reside as a distinct people.

---

## THE SAXONS.

THESE people, tall and well complexioned in their persons, were stout and hardy, delighting much in war and military exercises, and accounting it more honourable to take the necessities of life by force from others, than to provide them by their own industry. Yet were they free and bountiful in their manners, of a cheerful modest behaviour, and, though fierce and savage to their enemies, kind and benevolent towards each other. They were

great enemies to sloth ; and admitted nothing among their household furniture that was not absolutely necessary for their wants. Their beds appear to have been of a very simple construction, consisting of a thick boarded bottom, a very thin covering, and stiff hard pillows.

The leisure hours of the women, even of the better rank, were spent in spinning, and other servile employments : nor was it deemed discreditable for the lady of the house to be seen among her female servants, performing domestic duties, while her husband was with his men assisting and overlooking them.

The dress of the Saxons consisted, for the men, of a close coat reaching to the knee, with a short cloak thrown over the left shoulder, and buckled on the right. On the head, they wore a cap, made of skins, with the fur in-

wards, and pointed in front. The state dress of the king and his nobles comprised a loose coat reaching to the ankles, over which was a long robe drawn over both shoulders, and fastened with a clasp, or buckle, in front. The females wore a loose long robe, reaching to the ground, with large loose sleeves. The head was covered with a hood, or veil, which, falling down in front, was wrapped about the neck in great order. Both sexes wore shoes, or, rather, slippers; the legs of the men were covered half way up with a kind of bandage wound round, or else a strait stocking, reaching above the knee; while the commoner sort went bare-legged, and not unfrequently bare-footed. They also wore a sort of boot, curiously ornamented at the top.

As these people delighted in war, it is no wonder that the reputed god of war, called by

them *Woden*, should be the chief object of their religious worship. They believed that whoever was slain in battle, would sit at ease in Woden's hall, and quaff ale from the skulls of former enemies, an honour from which they excluded all who died of disease, or on a bed.

The arms of the Saxons consisted of a spear, or lance, which was carried in the hand ; a long sword appended to the side ; a short dagger for the girdle ; and a shield. The latter was held of such importance, that if a soldier lost his shield, he was prohibited all participation in the sacred rites : and so severely was this privation felt, that many, who had incurred it, destroyed themselves, rather than exist under the imputation of dishonour.

When they elected a general, which was done by the votes of the soldiers, he was set upon a shield, and borne on men's shoulders,

amidst the applauses and acclamations of the people.

The Saxons never went to battle, nor undertook any great expedition, without first consulting their wives, to whose advice they paid the greatest regard. And they also superstitiously placed great faith in the neighing of horses. One of these animals, which was kept by the priests, was deemed sacred ; and when they were about to declare war against their enemies, he was led out. If he put his right foot forward, it was deemed a good omen ; but if he stepped with his left foot first, the omen was esteemed unlucky, and they desisted from the intended enterprize. They went singing to battle, carrying before them the images of their gods, and had certain characters engraved upon their spears, which were held as magic spells. Every tenth

prisoner taken in war, they sacrificed to Woden, who was supposed to be highly pleased with such abominable slaughter.

From these people, Britain, for some time, obtained the name of *Saxony* ; but when the Angles, who came over with them, became the most powerful, the country was called *Anglia*, and *Angleland*, softened by degrees into *England* ; and the people were designated *Anglo-Saxons*.

It appears that the Anglo-Saxons chiefly boiled their meat. Having slain the animal, and cut it into pieces, it was put into a large kettle, which was set on a three-legged trivet, over a fire made upon the earth. The pot was stirred, and the meat taken out with a hook, or fork, furnished with two prongs bent perpendicularly to the handle. At their banquets their diet was rude, consisting of wild

apples, venison, curds, cream, &c. Every guest had a mess to himself; and their drink consisted of strong beer.

The Saxons, in common with other northern nations, were much addicted to hard drinking; and when they drank, they were accustomed to pledge each other. That is, the person who was about to drink, asked one of the company whether he would pledge him? The other replying that he would, held up his knife or sword, to guard him whilst he drank; because, while a man is drinking, he is necessarily in an unguarded posture, and exposed to the treacherous stroke of some secret enemy. Hence the modern custom of drinking healths.

The practice of hard drinking prevailed in England to such an excess, in the time of King Edgar, that he, by the advice of Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, put down many



alehouses, suffering only one to be in a village, or small town; and he farther ordained that pins, or nails, should be fastened into the drinking cups, or horns, at stated distances; and whoever drank beyond the given mark was subjected to severe punishment.

#### ORDEALS.

THE Saxons, even after their conversion to Christianity, were extremely superstitious; and, in doubtful cases of alleged crime, depended much upon a kind of trial, called the *ordeal*, in which the accused person made an appeal to heaven, while he exposed himself to manifest danger or hazard; and if he came off unhurt, he was judged to be innocent.

The ordeals were four in number: two by fire, and two by water. The first fiery ordeal consisted in the accused person walking, blind-

folded and with bare feet, over nine red-hot iron ploughshares, laid at unequal distances. If he avoided the ploughshares, he was declared innocent ; if not, he was accounted guilty, and punished accordingly.

In the second fiery ordeal, the suspected party took a red-hot iron into his hand : if he could hold it without being burned, he was acquitted ; but, on the contrary, if it scorched his hand, he was instantly condemned : for they thought heaven, by miracle, would certainly interpose to save the innocent.

In the first of the watery ordeals, the accused was set before a vessel full of boiling water, into which he was to thrust his naked arm ; and sentence was given according as he was scalded or not. In the second, the accused was thrown into deep water, and if he struggled in the least to keep himself on the

surface, he was accounted guilty ; but if he remained motionless on the top of the water, he was acquitted with honour.

From this latter mode of ordeal, came the practice of swimming or ducking people suspected of witchcraft, though the mode of judgment was reversed. The parties accused were thrown into deep water, with a rope about their waist, and cross bound, the right thumb to the left toe, and the left thumb to the right toe. If they sank, they were held innocent ; but if they swam, they were, without farther consideration, hurried before a justice, and, their warrant being made out with all speed, sent to prison to take their trial for an impossible crime.

Another method of proving a witch, was by weighing the party against the church Bible : if she outweighed it, she was accounted inno-

cent ; but, if the Bible proved heaviest, she was instantly condemned.

However absurd and foolish these superstitious customs may seem to us, they were kept in use during many generations. The trial by ordeal was not laid aside till the close of King John's reign : and the persecution of poor old women, as reputed witches, continued as low down as the time of James I. in whose reign several of these unhappy wretches were burned alive, on evidence derived from such ridiculous trials as those I have just described.

## THE DANES.

ABOUT two centuries after the Saxons had settled in England, the country was invaded by the Danes ; and a sanguinary contest was maintained between the two people for nearly 400 years. During this time, England was alternately subject to Saxons or Danes, as one or the other prevailed in the field of battle ; and many Danes became settled in Northumberland and other northern counties, as well as in Norfolk and Suffolk, where many peculiarities, derived from them, are still observable.

The Danes differed originally but little from the Saxons, in their manners and customs ; only they were more cruel in their sacrifices ; and offered human victims, upon almost every

occasion, at the shrine of their chief idol *Thor*. No wonder, therefore, if they were barbarous in their manners : they were also faithless to their oaths, great gluttons, and hard drinkers. They were warlike, contemning dangers, even to death ; and it was the vow of every free man to die with his weapons in his hands.

Before their arrival, the Anglo-Saxons had embraced Christianity ; and they forced such of the Danes, as they conquered, to embrace it also : but both retained so many of their former heathen customs, which they engrafted upon their new religion, that their manners were little, if at all, amended by the change.

The exercises in which the Danes delighted were those of the sword, the lance, the bow, wrestling, throwing heavy weights, riding on horseback, swimming, rowing, and skaiting.

Among their amusements, chess had the pre-eminence.

Their kings and heroes were fond of having their deeds of valour made known ; and frequently took their scalds, or poets, (much the same as the Saxon minstrels) to the field of battle, that they might witness their actions, and afterwards celebrate them in their songs.

The dresses of the Danes, were, as to form, much like those of the Anglo-Saxons, but more magnificent ; and they wore shoes, and also a kind of buskin, with the toe turned somewhat downwards. They paid particular attention to their hair, which they were continually combing : and their beds were better adapted for ease and indulgence than those of the Anglo-Saxons.

The defensive armour of the Danes, during their dominion in England, covered the whole

body, legs, and arms; and was made of leather, defended by strong wires interwoven across each other: this was called a *suit of mail*. The head was defended by a helmet of iron, or brass, standing high over the head, with a point coming down between the eyes, to save the face from a cross stroke of the enemy. When a young warrior was first enlisted, he received a white and smooth buckler, called the *shield of expectation*; and it was not till he had achieved some signal act in the field of battle, that he was allowed to have the record of his valour emblazoned upon it. This honour, indeed, was rarely obtained by the common soldiers, so jealous were the grandees of the distinction.

The axe, or halbert, was more used by the Danes than by any other northern nations; whence it has been supposed to have origi-



nated with them. Their other weapons were a sword, larger and longer than that of the Saxons, and a lance. Their call to arms was by sound of the trumpet, or bugle-horn ; and their favourite standard was the figure of a raven.

The Danish fortresses, which were rude castles, built on the summit of rocks, were rendered nearly inaccessible by thick misshapen walls, which, from their windings and turnings were often called by a name signifying *serpents* or *dragons*. Within these fortresses, females of distinction retired for safety ; whence arose numerous romances and fables of great princesses guarded by dragons, &c. These fortresses were rarely taken by an enemy, except by surprise, or after a long blockade. When the reduction of one was of great importance, the besiegers raised terraces and

artificial banks on the lowest side of the fort, and annoyed those within by throwing in showers of arrows, stones, boiling water, and melted pitch ; offensive missiles, which the besieged were not negligent in returning.

The Danes were very formidable on the sea : originally, their vessels were a sort of barks with twelve oars ; but they afterwards built others, stronger and more capacious, some of which, in the eleventh century, are said to have been capable of holding a hundred and twenty men ; some were even larger. The ships of King Canute are said to have been covered with gold and silver ; and on the top of the mast of each ship was the gilt figure of some bird turning on a spindle with the wind, to indicate the quarter from which it blew.

The sterns of the ships were adorned with

various figures, cast in metal, and plated with gold and silver.

The Danes, during their ascendancy in England, were so arrogant in their conduct, and affected so much of stateliness in their transactions, that the English, as they succeeded in shaking off their yoke, called them in derision *Lord Danes* ; whence came the old term of reproach, *Lourdan*, for a conceited worthless fellow.

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## THE NORMANS.

WITH the circumstances which gave occasion for the Norman invasion of England, under William I. you are doubtless familiar : I shall therefore pass at once to what is

the more immediate purpose of this little book.

The Normans first brought the use of cavalry more generally into the kingdom: for the chief force of the Saxons and Danes always consisted of infantry. The horse soldiers of the Normans consisted of those who were completely covered with mail, and those who were lightly armed: the former supported the set battle, the latter were useful in skirmishes. The foot soldiers, or men at arms, were of three classes: first, such as were covered with mail, from head to foot, for close combat; secondly, those who were more slightly armed, bearing oval shields and long lances, for supporting the charge; and, thirdly, men still lighter armed, with small round shields and long slight spears, with which they galled the horses of the enemy, and then retired be-

hind their own cavalry. Besides these, the Norman armies had slingers, archers, cross-bowmen, knights, and esquires, or armour-bearers.

The defensive armour of the Normans was chiefly the coat of mail, formed of small iron links, with joints at convenient distances, which easily moved over each other. This, which covered the body from head to foot, was especially used by soldiers of the higher rank ; those below them had body armour of iron or leather ; and some had only breastplates, or cuirasses. When the mail itself did not cover the head, as was sometimes the case, they wore helmets of iron or brass. The chief leaders and standard-bearers generally guarded their faces with a beaver, composed of thin iron plates fastened on the mail : others had their faces uncovered ; as was also the left

hand, for the convenience of holding the shield.

The offensive weapons of the Normans consisted of swords, battle-axes, spears, clubs headed with iron spikes, cross-bows and quarrels, long bows and arrows. Their standards, which differed from those of the Saxons, frequently bore the arms of the leaders. It was esteemed a great honour to bear the royal standard; and the banners and standards taken from an enemy were much prized, and generally hung up in churches or monasteries, as proud memorials of the success of the captors. On the other hand, it was a lasting disgrace for an army to lose its colours; and the Normans fought with the greatest spirit in their defence.

A predilection for French fashions had obtained among the English nobility, in the

reign of Edward the Confessor, who had been educated in Normandy; and when the Normans got the mastery in England, the rage for foppish dress increased to such a degree among all orders of men, that Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, found himself unable to repress it, for want of the concurrence of his ecclesiastical brethren. King Henry I. however, succeeded better: he discouraged it at court, and wherever his authority extended; and by degrees it gave place to a plain and elegant simplicity.

The common dress of the king and noblemen consisted of a close long gown, or surcoat, put on, like a shirt, over the head, and reaching to the feet. Over this principal garment was a long robe, or cloak, thrown loosely over the shoulders, and descending to the heels. The surcoat was often ornamented

with a collar, or border, of gold, or embroidery, set with precious stones; and the girdle, with which it was fastened close to the body, was of the same valuable materials. The coronation habits of the kings consisted of the surcoat, or close habit, with a broad collar turned down, from which hung the coronation robe.

The soldiers were clad in a close tunic, reaching only to the knees. The habits of the clergy did not much differ from those of the Saxons: the monks wore large loose gowns, reaching to the ground, with long sleeves, and a cowl, or hood, hanging behind. Their heads were shorn close round; and the priests had an additional loose surplice over their other habits.

The queen and great ladies wore a loose gown, girded about their waist, and reaching



to the ground, with a veil over the head. The chief distinction between the unmarried and the married, was an additional robe for the latter, which hung down in front, somewhat like the sacerdotal robe of a priest.

Among the common people, a short jacket, girt about the loins, and scarcely reaching the top of the knees, was the usual dress. Some wore shoes and stockings ; others had neither. Their heads were protected by a kind of hood.

It was in this period that extravagance in apparel began to make its appearance among the commonalty. In the reign of Henry I. the use of furs upon the garments became general in England : it had before been confined to the robes of kings and nobles. The use of silk was first adopted in the time of Henry II. as was also a costly kind of stuff, called, in

Latin, *aurifrisium*, which, Camden says, was much esteemed in Italy.

The lords, barons, and knights, passed their time in public shows, tilts, and tournaments, at which they appeared in the most splendid attire, all emulous of obtaining a frivolous pre-eminence for the elegance, costliness, and fashion of their habiliments; for it was accounted laudable and honourable to the nation, to exhibit the opulence and grandeur of its inhabitants. Hence, though the regal courts of the Normans were in many respects much like those of the Anglo-Saxons, the appearance of the Norman courtiers was more brilliant.

The public feasts and banquets of the Norman æra were of the most magnificent and profuse kind. Thirty thousand dishes were prepared for the marriage feast of Richard

Earl of Cornwall, brother to Henry III. ; and at the knighting and marriage of young Alexander, King of Scotland, to Margaret, daughter of Henry III. no less than sixty oxen were slain, with every thing else in proportion that was scarce and rare. The boar's head was esteemed a noble and princely dish ; and was brought to the king's table with the trumpeters sounding their trumpets in procession before it. The kings sat at meat, attended by their physicians, who warned them of what dishes they should abstain from, and when to leave off eating, lest they should endanger their health.

At the coronation of the Norman kings, as well as on the royal birth-days and solemn festivals, no kind of profusion was spared, either of wealth or banqueting. The houses were set out with lights, the bells were rung, nume-

rous bonfires were made for the amusement of the common people; and the conduits were made to run with wine instead of water.

It was customary with the Norman kings, in common with those of other northern nations, to have their minstrels, or bards, in attendance, while they sat at their meals, to sing the heroic deeds of their patron, or his predecessors, accompanying their lays with the notes of their harps.

In the midst of all this extravagance in eating and drinking, the Norman æra was strongly marked by a spirit of hospitality and benevolence towards the poor. From many instances that might be cited, I shall select that of Robert de Winchilsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, who, besides distributing the daily fragments from his table, which were considerable, gave, every Friday and Saturday, be-

sides "great alms," a loaf of bread, sufficient for the day, to as many as would fetch it, and these amounted to four or five thousand at the least. On every great festival, also, he distributed one hundred and fifty pence to as many poor people, one penny (rather more than ten pence halfpenny of modern money) to each person; and he sent, daily, meat and bread, with money and apparel, to such of the aged and diseased as were incapable of repairing to his palace to partake of what was there distributed. At that time there were no laws for enforcing the maintenance of the poor; but the really necessitous always found in the halls of the wealthy, and at the gates of religious houses, relief proportioned to their wants.

The most favourite pastimes of the Norman period were those of hunting, hawking, and

other field sports: and so passionately fond was William the First of them, that, to make what is still called the New Forest, in Hampshire, for the preservation of game, he depopulated full thirty square miles in that part of the country; pulling down churches, destroying whole villages, and driving the wretched inhabitants into misery and exile. But he little thought that in this very forest, his son, William Rufus, would be slain by a weapon used in his favourite pastime. Henry the First, another son of William, was also so fond of field sports, that, like his father, he destroyed many churches and villages to form a park at Woodstock, the first of its kind in England; and surrounded it with a stone wall seven miles in circumference. Here he kept, besides a great number of deer, many beasts sent him from abroad, as lions, leopards, lynxes,

&c. He had also there a porcupine, which was then esteemed a wonderful curiosity, it being the only animal of that kind ever seen in England. His example was followed by Henry Earl of Warwick, who made himself a park at Wadgenoke, or Wedgnock, near Warwick, for the preservation of his deer and other animals for hunting. Henry II. also was famous for hunting, hawking, and similar pastimes, which, with the game of chess, were considered kingly sports. 9

Among the common people, running at the quintain was the game in greatest esteem. The quintain consisted of an upright pole, fixed steadily in the earth, with a transverse beam on the top, which turned easily about, like a weathercock. At one end of the beam, a broad flat board was nailed, and at the other

hung a large bag full of sand. The players, mounted on horseback, and each armed with a long staff, or blunt lance, ran singly at the board. He who missed it, was laughed at ; and he that struck it full with his lance gave the beam a sudden whirl, and, unless he rode with great swiftness, got a sound blow on his head and neck, from the bag of sand, which hung on the other end, sometimes of such force as to unhorse him.

The quintain was a military exercise of high antiquity ; and originally consisted of the trunk of a tree, or a post, set up for the practice of young beginners in chivalry. Afterwards, a staff, or spear, was fixed upright in the ground ; and a shield, hung upon it, was the mark to strike at. The dexterity of the performer was exhibited in his striking the



shield in such a manner as to break the ligatures and bring it to the ground. As an improvement, the staff and shield were exchanged for a carved figure, generally a resemblance of a Saracen, or Turk, with a shield upon the left arm, and a club, or sabre, in the right hand. This quintain was placed upon a pivot, on which it turned so freely, that if the tilter, who exercised on horseback, struck it any where than full upon the forehead between the eyes, or upon the nose, it would spin round with great velocity, and give him, as he passed forward, a severe blow upon the back with the club, or sabre. This was considered highly disgraceful to him who received it, and excited the laughter and ridicule of the spectators against him.

Sometimes, in the middle ages, military men

would practise with their lances at a man completely armed ; who, acting on the defensive, parried off their blows with his shield. This may, not improperly, be called the *human quintain*.

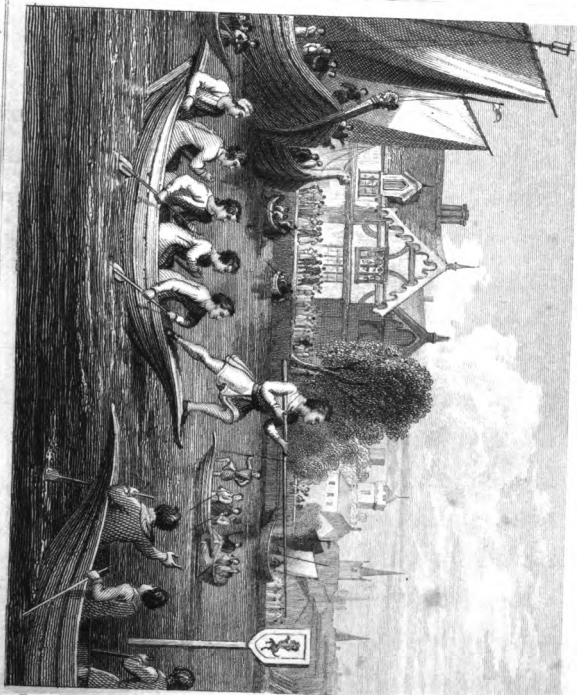
Even among boys, the quintain was a favourite amusement. Sometimes they would tilt at a tub, or bucket, of water, set upon a post ; and if the blow were not given in the proper place, and with great dexterity, the bucket would be overturned, and drench the assailant with its contents. Sometimes a boy, mounted on a wooden horse, and drawn with considerable velocity by two of his companions, would tilt at the quintain, armed with a bag of sand, as already described.

Persons of rank were taught in their childhood to relish such exercises as were of a mar-

tial nature ; and their very toys were calculated to bias their minds in favour of military achievements.

In the Lent season, every Sunday afternoon was spent in riding courses on trained horses, and in counterfeit battles with lances and shields ; with foot races, in which the competitors endeavoured to throw each other down.

In the Easter holidays, the Londoners had mock sea-fights : or else a pole was set up in the middle of the Thames, with a shield made fast upon it : then a young man standing in a boat, which, being rowed by oars, and impelled forward by the tide, glided swiftly on, struck the shield with his lance as he passed by. If he broke his lance and kept his footing, he was deemed to have performed well ;



PL. II.

*Water-Grinder*

p. 44



but if his lance remained unbroken, the concussion was sure to throw him backwards into the water, to the great amusement of the bystanders. Two boats, however, were always in attendance to save him from drowning. This was called the *water quintain*.

Leaping, shooting with bows, wrestling, throwing stones, casting javelins, or fighting with javelins and bucklers, were ordinary sports in holiday seasons. In winter time, scarcely a holiday passed without some boar-fight, or bull-bait: the ladies, meantime, amusing themselves with dancing and other feminine amusements.

When the waters were frozen over, the youth exercised themselves with sliding, or driving each other forward on large pieces of ice, instead of sledges. And as the use of skates

was then unknown, some of the more expert bound to their shoes the leg-bones of animals, and with stakes, which they held in their hands, headed with sharp iron, pushed themselves along with great velocity. Sometimes two men, pushing themselves forward in this manner from opposite points, would rush against each other with their staves, in the manner of tilting; and much mischief ensued.

The graver citizens amused themselves with birds, as sparrow-hawks, goose-hawks, &c. while others delighted in dogs to hunt in the woody grounds. Among schoolboys, at Shrove-tide, the favourite amusements were cock-fighting in the morning, and, in the afternoon, playing with balls, &c.

The theatrical amusements of this period

were all derived from sacred subjects, and represented the actions of our Saviour, the Virgin Mary, the twelve Apostles, miracles wrought by Saints, and the acts and sufferings of martyrs. These exhibitions, called *Miracles*, were performed by ecclesiastics, in churches, as I shall hereafter have occasion to remark more fully.



## THE ENGLISH.

THE Norman period continued about one hundred and fifty years, or to the close of the reign of Henry III. With Edward I. the æra properly called *English* is reckoned to commence. Not that any change of people then took place ; but a marked difference had arisen in the manners of the people, who about this time began to lose sight of the distinction of Norman or Saxon origin ; for both were blended in the general designation of *English*.

A grand appearance was much affected in this æra. When the king received any foreign embassy, or gave public audience, he was seated under a rich canopy of state, upon

a splendid throne, raised above his attendant lords, who were ranged, according to their respective ranks and degrees, on either side. When he went to the parliament, he was clad in his regal robes, and held the sceptre in his hand. On saints' days, he went to church with great splendour of retinue, or rode in state through the city where he held his court. He went to the wars royally habited, with a crown, coronet, or chaplet, on his helmet, and his standard borne before him.

This propensity for magnificence extended from the sovereign to his subjects, whose dress, though subject to a vast variety of fashions and alterations, was generally pompous. Indeed, it was, in many cases, so preposterous, that both the government and the clergy deemed it their duty to interfere, in order to check the licentiousness of the times.

The luxury of apparel, about the commencement of the reign of Edward III. was strongly satirised by the Scots; “for, at that time,” says an old chronicle, “the Englishmen were clothed all in coats (*pettycoats*) and hoods, painted with letters and flowers, and seemly with long beards.”—In the third year of his reign, Edward III. when he made his public entry into Amiens, was habited in a robe of crimson velvet, powdered with golden leopards, wearing a crown upon his head, and a sword by his side, with spurs of pure gold upon his heels. About the nineteenth year of the same reign, the king, for the encouragement of military sports, established his *Round Table* at Windsor, and great numbers of foreign knights resorting thither, the English took from them such a variety of fashions and new habits, that the old monks cried shame upon them. Doug-

las, monk of Glastonbury, after declaiming in rather coarse language, against this folly of dress, affirms that “these disguisings and pride afterward brought forth and caused many mischiefs and mishaps that happened in the realm of England.”

In the forty-fourth year of the same king, caps of divers colours, especially red, with costly linings, began to be used; and, soon afterwards, a short cloak, covering only the shoulders, was introduced, and gave “great offence to those who did pique themselves on being of the *haut ton*.” And yet, in the thirty-sixth year of the same reign, the parliament had prohibited the use of furs and costly apparel to all who were possessed of less than one hundred pounds a year in land; and the use of gold or silver ornaments, as necklaces, rings, &c. to all who could not spend ten pounds a year.

These prohibitions were very badly attended to in the reign of Richard II. The king himself was very sumptuous in his apparel, and, among other gorgeous suits, had one coat, covered with gold and precious stones, valued at thirty thousand marks, or about 20,000*l.* in those days. His example was naturally followed by his subjects; and it is said, that Sir John Arundel, who had a change of no less than fifty-two suits of cloth-of-gold tissue, was thought to exceed even the king himself in the splendour of his apparel.

It was in the beginning of this reign, also, that piked shoes came into use in England, the points of which were so long that they were tied up to the knees of the wearers with silken strings, or chains of gold, or of silver gilt. This fashion is spoken of, by writers of the times, as detestable, and both clergy and

legislators endeavoured to suppress it. Their efforts, however, seem only to have made the people more obstinate in their adherence to it; for it continued in vogue for upwards of eighty years, and, at last, was with difficulty abolished in the fifth year of Edward IV. by a clerical edict, that the points of shoes and boots should not exceed two inches in length, on pain to the wearer of excommunication and a fine of twenty shillings.

Among the fashionable vagaries of this period, we read of “wide surcoats, reaching only to the loins;”—long gowns, reaching to the heels, close before, and sticking out on the sides, “so that on the back they make men seem women;”—men’s hoods, “small, tied under the chin, and buttoned like the women’s, but set with gold, silver, and precious stones;”—men’s tippets, called *lirripippes*, reaching

from the neck to the heels, “all jagged,” or fringed;—hose of two colours, as white and red, white and blue, white and black, black and red, &c. a colour for each leg; or a boot on one leg, and a shoe on the other;—garments divided in the middle, straight down, one side of one colour, as white, the other side of another, as dark blue;—together with costly embroidery, vandyking, waving, plaiting, winding, and “other waste of cloth, in vanity.” The women about this time began to use high head-dresses, with “piked horns,” and long trains to their gowns.

The calamitous reign of Henry VI. the æra of external disgrace and internal discord, was also the æra of folly; for, it is said, “all the fantastical and ridiculous fashions of former times” were then collected together. To such an extent were they carried, that in the third

year of Henry's successor, Edward IV. the parliament endeavoured to check the folly of the times, by enacting that no person under the estate of a lord should wear any cloth-of-gold tissue, nor apparel embroidered with gold, nor any furs upon their garments ; also, that no yeoman, or person under that degree, have in their clothing "any bolsters of wool, cotton, or other stuffs," or in their jackets any thing but the lining, and that equal to the outside. The length of the gown, jacket, or cloke, was also prescribed ; and the points of boots and shoes were again restricted to the length of two inches. Heavy penalties were also laid upon any tailors or shoemakers who should contravene the provisions of this law : yet, so little effect had this legislative regulation, that, two years afterwards, it became necessary that a royal proclamation should be



issued against the use of long-pointed shoes, in which, excommunication by the clergy, and a penalty of twenty shillings, was denounced against the makers and the wearers. This seems to have had the desired effect ; for we hear of no more decrees against this fashion. Indeed, the clerical excommunication was so terrible in its effects, that the dread of it was sufficient to deter men from any practice against which it was levelled. X

Although a considerable improvement had taken place at this time, in domestic comforts, compared with what they were during the Saxon, Danish, and Norman periods, they still appear to modern conceptions as of a very coarse nature. The first use of feather beds in England is not ascertained : they are spoken of so early as the reign of Richard II. but were not in general use so low down as the time of

Elizabeth. In the beginning of her reign, and in the days of her immediate predecessors, straw pallettes, covered only with a sheet and coverlet, with a round log of wood for a bolster, seem to have been in common use ; or, perhaps, a wealthy farmer, or yeoman, would have for himself a flock mattress, with a sack of chaff for his pillow ; in which case he was deemed a man in *comfortable* circumstances, more especially if he could afford his servants a sheet above them ; for beneath, they had nothing but the canvass case which enclosed the straw that served for their bed.

The domestic utensils were of wood ; as wooden platters for plates, wooden spoons, wooden bowls for basins, &c. with, perhaps in the best farmers' houses, a pewter salt-cellar. The rent of a farm was about four pounds a year, which could hardly be paid without

selling a cow, a horse, or more ; because, says the historian of those times, too much attention was given to the alehouse, and too little to work.

The English were always fond of good cheer ; and they carried their indulgences in this respect to such excess, that Edward III. in the seventeenth year of his reign, endeavoured to repress it, by laying down certain rules for eating and drinking, by which all persons of *common rank* were forbidden to have any dainty dishes at their table, or any costly drink. Such an interference is repugnant to our present notions of freedom ; yet it should seem that Edward was by no means niggard in his allowance ; for his ordinance only went to restrain the dinner or supper to two courses, each course consisting of three dishes ; . and *soused* meat, if used, was to be counted as one

of those dishes. By another law, he prohibited servants from eating fish or flesh more than once a day. Such laws rarely produce the effect designed ; in this instance, the king's son, Lionel Duke of Clarence, set the example of disobedience ; for, at his marriage feast, he had above thirty courses on his table ; and the fragments sufficed for upwards of a thousand people. In the following reign, King Richard II. kept his Christmas (A.D. 1399) at Westminster Hall ; and such numbers came to the feast, that, every day, twenty-six or twenty-eight oxen, and three hundred sheep, were slain, besides fowls out of number. The same king had in his kitchen three hundred servants ; and fed, every day, ten thousand persons. The nuptial feast of Henry IV. (Richard's successor) consisted of six courses, notwithstanding the existing law for no more than

two ; and it is worthy of remark, that the first three consisted of meat and poultry, the last three chiefly of fish, the reverse of modern practice ; and the confectionary was included in the first course. Richard Nevil, Earl of Warwick, surnamed the king-maker, kept such a house, that six oxen were frequently eaten for breakfast. From these instances, some idea may be formed of the profuseness of this period in eating ; nor was it at all less in respect of drinking.

Wines of most kinds were to be had in England ; but the preference was for ale and beer ; and these were of as many qualities and ages as the brewers chose to make them. The beer used at the tables of the nobility was generally a year old ; sometimes it was of two years standing, or even more. It was brewed in March, and therefore called *March beer*.

For the household, it was commonly of a month's age, never under ; each one desiring to have it as stale as possible, so it were not sour ; and their bread as new as might be after it had cooled from the oven.

In the days of Henry VIII. Queen Elizabeth, and the succeeding reigns, when coffee, tea, &c. were unknown in England, it was not uncommon for the chief lords and ladies of the court to breakfast upon a fine beef-steak broiled, with a cup of ale, at eight or nine in the morning at farthest. They then usually dined at mid-day, or one o'clock ; and such as ate suppers most commonly sat down to meat about seven, or a little before, in the evening. In Queen Mary's reign, the supper hour seems to have been still earlier. According to Holinshed, the nobility, gentry, and students, dined at eleven in the forenoon ; and supped at five.

or between five and six, in the afternoon. The merchants seldom dined before twelve at noon, nor supped before six in the afternoon, especially in London. "The husbandmen," continues he, "dine also at high noon, as they call it, and sup at seven or eight. But out of term, in our universities, the scholars dine at ten." Froissart mentions waiting on the Duke of Lancaster, at five in the afternoon, *when he had supped.*

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## CORONATIONS.

THE coronation of the English kings has always been conducted with great parade and magnificence. In early times, the kings did not consider themselves settled in the govern-

ment till this ceremony had been performed ; and they would even have it repeated on particular occasions : as, after an absence from the kingdom, or on the suppression of an insurrection. William the Conqueror was crowned regularly thrice in every year ; at Easter, in Winchester ; at Whitsuntide, in Westminster ; and in the winter, at Gloucester. On each of these occasions, the feasting was so pompous and expensive, that the whole kingdom became impoverished. The kings also sometimes caused their eldest sons to be crowned during their own lifetime, and made their nobles swear allegiance to them ; with a view of confirming to them the succession : but the expedient frequently failed of its proposed effect.

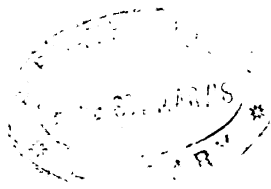
The first coronation, which is circumstantially described, is that of Richard I. The

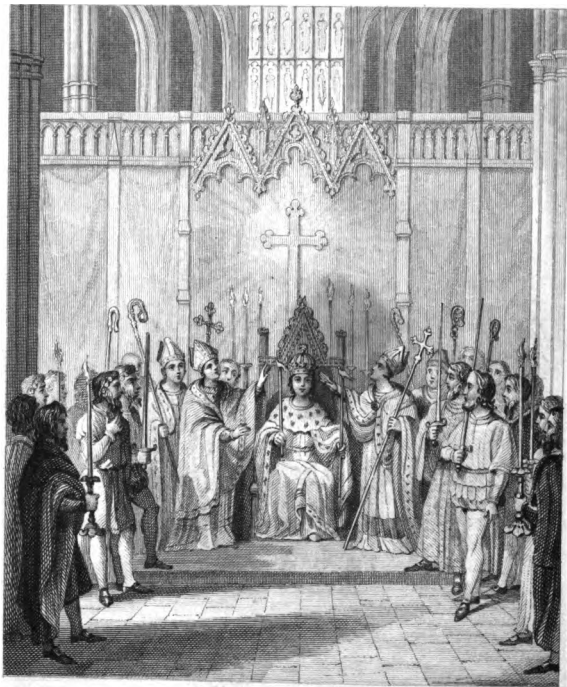


whole ceremonies are thus given by Matthew Paris : “ The duke Richard, having every thing prepared for his coronation, came to London, where were assembled, the Archbishops of Canterbury, of Rouen, in Normandy, and of Treves, in Germany ; also the Archbishop of Dublin, and all the bishops, earls, barons, and nobles of the realm, in order as follows : First came the archbishops, bishops, abbots, and the rest of the clergy, in their rich canonical robes, bearing crosses, holy water, and censers with incense ; and from the inner door of his bedchamber they conducted the duke (for he was not yet called king) in solemn procession, to the high altar of the abbey church of Westminster. Between the bishops and the clergy, went four barons, each bearing a candlestick with a wax taper lighted. After these came two earls, the first

carrying the royal sceptre, on the top of which was a golden swan ; the other bearing a royal rod, on the top of which was a dove. Then came two earls, and between them three others, carrying swords in golden scabbards, taken from the king's treasury : and they were followed by six earls and barons, bearing the royal robes and vestures. Next came the Earl of Chester, bearing the crown, beautifully wrought with gold, and set with jewels. After these came the duke, with several bishops on his right hand and his left, and over them was borne a rich canopy of silk, held by four barons upon four lances ornamented with gold. When the duke arrived at the altar, on which was laid the book of the Holy Gospel, and various relics of saints, he there swore ' that all the days of his life, he would constantly endeavour to keep the holy ordinance of God, and pre-

serve the peace and honour of the church.' He also swore ' to exercise justice towards his subjects, to abolish all grievous laws, and observe and put in practice all that were good, and agreeing with the constitution of the people.' He was then stripped of all his garments, except his breeches and his shirt, which last was cut away at the shoulders, because he was to be there anointed. Rich sandals, splendidly wrought with gold, were then put upon his feet, and Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, anointed him on his head, his shoulders, and his right arm, with solemn prayers and other offices of the holy church. A sacred cap of linen, furred without, was then placed on his head, and he was habited in the regal garments, the Tunica, and the Dalmatica ; the archbishop gave him a sword, to defend the rights of the church ; and two earls put spurs





p. 67.

*Coronation of Richard I.*

upon his heels, and clothed him with a cloak. After these ceremonies, the archbishop conjured him not to accept of the charge, which was about to be laid upon him, unless he were fully resolved to perform what he had so solemnly sworn ; to which he replied, that ‘ he would, with God’s help, faithfully observe the whole that he had promised.’ The crown was then given him from the altar, and he handed it to the archbishop, who placed it upon his head : then the sceptre was put into his right hand, and the royal rod, with the dove on the top, in his left ; and, thus crowned, he was led by the bishops and barons, preceded by the barons bearing the tapers, with the crosses, and the three swords, to his seat. The solemn mass was then begun ; and when they came to the anthem of offering, two bishops led him to the altar, to make his offering, after which

they reconducted him to his seat. When the mass was finished, with the singing and every other sacred rite, the two bishops led him, crowned, with the sceptre in his right hand and the royal rod in his left, to the place where he had been at first seated, where the royal garments and the crown were taken off, and he was clad in lighter vestures, and a smaller crown was put upon his head; and thus he went forth to dinner, where the archbishops, bishops, earls, and barons, were placed at table, according to their order, rank, and dignity, with the clergy and people."

Froissart, who lived in the time of Henry IV. is either more particular in his account of the coronation of that prince, or else, in the course of two hundred years, some additional ceremonies had been introduced. He writes: "the day being assigned for his (Duke Henry's)

coronation, which was on Monday, 13th October, 1399, he, on the Saturday preceding, went from the palace of Westminster to the Tower of London, with a great number of attendants. And the esquires, who were to be made knights the morning following, were there also lodged, to the number of forty-six. Each of these esquires had his own chamber and a bath, wherein to bathe himself that night, and on the morrow the Duke of Lancaster made them all knights, at mass, giving to each a long strait circoat (surcoat) of a green colour, and the sleeves furred with *menever*,\* and hoods of the same, furred in the same manner, like priests. And these new-made knights had, besides, upon the left shoulder, a double cord of white silk, with white tassels hanging down.

\* *Menever fur* is said to be the skin of a squirrel's belly, or that of the white weazel.



“ On Sunday, after dinner, the Duke went from the Tower to Westminster, bare-headed, having a collar about his neck, with the same device as was usually worn by the Kings of France. He was habited in a short jacket of tissue of gold, after the German fashion, with a blue garter on his left leg : and he was mounted on a beautiful white courser. He was accompanied by the prince his son, six dukes, six earls, and eight barons, with at least eight or nine hundred knights : and in this manner they rode through London, where all the citizens and companies, with their ensigns and different devices, met the duke, and escorted him to Westminster. Their number amounted to full six thousand. On that day, as well as the next, nine branches of fountains were opened in Cheapside, from which ran both red and white wine. At night, the duke

bathed ; and on the morrow, at his uprising, he went to confession, after which he heard three several masses. Then the prelates who were assembled, with a great number of clergy, came from the abbey church at Westminster to the palace, to conduct the duke to the church ; and they returned in the same procession, followed by the duke and all the lords and grandees attending.

“ In the procession from the palace to the abbey, a rich canopy of silk was held over the duke’s head, supported upon four silver wands, and at the corners were four bells ringing. This canopy was carried by four citizens of Dover, to whom it belonged by right. On each side of the duke was borne a sword ; the one, the sword of the church, carried by his son, the Prince of Wales ; the other, the sword of justice, borne by Henry Percy, Earl of Nor-

thumberland, constable of England; and the Earl of Westmoreland, marshal of England, carried the sceptre. The procession entered the church about nine o'clock. In the middle of the church was a high scaffold, covered with rich cloth; and upon the scaffold was placed a chair, or rather a royal throne, covered with gold tissue; and when the duke was come into the church, he went up on the scaffold, and seated himself in the royal chair, with great state, but without either crown or hood upon his head. The archbishop then spoke to those below the scaffold, and told them, that 'God had sent them a man (shewing them the duke) to be their king and lord:' and then he demanded if 'they were willing he should crown and consecrate him for their king?' To which they all, as with one voice, cried

out, ‘ Yes ! Yes ! ’ holding their hands crossed, as promising him their faith and loyalty.

“ The duke then descended, and went to the altar to be consecrated ; to perform which holy office there were two archbishops and ten bishops. Being undressed to his shirt, before the altar, he was there anointed in six places, on the head, on the breast, upon the two shoulders, and behind between the shoulders, and on the hands. Then they put a hood over his head ; and while they were anointing and consecrating him, the clergy sang the litany and such offices as are used at the blessing of the water at the font. Then was the king habited in a church dress, like a priest, and they put upon him a robe of red velvet, like a prelate’s. Shoes also, of the same kind of velvet, were put upon his feet, and spurs with

only one point, without any rowels. The sword of justice was then drawn out of the sheath, and, after it had been blessed, given to the king, who returned it into the scabbard, and presented it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, by whom it was girded upon him. The crown of Edward the Confessor (arched in the form of a cross) was then brought out, and, having first been blessed by the archbishop, placed upon the king's head. Mass was then performed ; and at its conclusion the king retired from the church to his palace. The constable of England and the marshal, together with the constables-lieutenants, went before the king, to clear the way as he returned to the palace. In the middle of the palace-yard was a fountain, which played out wine, both red and white, through several pipes.

“ The king, on his return, went into the

hall, and thence to his chamber ; but he soon come back into the great hall, and sat down to dinner. At the first table was the king, the two archbishops, and ten bishops. On either side of the king was borne a sword, the one by the Prince of Wales, the other by the constable of England ; and at the bottom of the table stood the marshal, holding the sceptre. At the second table were the lords of the cinque-ports, &c. of England ; and at the third the citizens of London. The fourth was occupied by the new-made knights ; and the fifth by the knights and esquires of honour.

“ While they sat at dinner, a knight, named *Diureth*, came in, armed at all points, mounted on a horse, also covered with mail, of a beautiful red colour ; on one side he had a naked sword, and on the other a dagger ; and before him went another knight, carrying his

lance. In his hand, he held a label, which, after he had read its contents aloud, he gave to the king. The contents were to the following purport; ‘that if any knight, esquire, or gentleman, would either say or maintain, that King Henry was not the rightful king, he was ready to combat with him immediately, or any where, or at any time, that it should please the king to assign.’ The king gave the label to one of his heralds, and caused him to cry it in six several places, in the city as well as in the hall; but none were hardy enough to make any answer to this challenge. When the king had dined, and taken some wine and confectionary in the same hall, he retired to his chamber, and every one departed to his own home.”

As Froissart has here introduced the king’s champion, whom Paris had left unnoticed, it

may not be amiss to observe that the office is much more ancient than the time of Henry IV. At the coronation of his predecessor, Richard II. Baldwin Freville exhibited a petition for it; but it was adjudged to his competitor, Sir John Dymocke, and it hath ever since continued in his family, who hold the manor of Scrivelsby, in Linconshire, subject to the condition that the lord thereof shall be the king's champion. His fee for the service on the day of coronation is a gilt cup and cover, which the king sends to him full of wine, after he has made his challenge.

At the coronation of his present majesty, William IV. the attendance of the champion was dispensed with; the change in national manners having long before rendered his challenge unnecessary, and himself a mere puppet of unmeaning pageantry.



## PAGEANTS AND PROCESSIONS.

THESE constitute a very prominent feature in the times under consideration ; and no cost was spared to render them splendid and impressive.

When Richard II. met the King of France, to confirm his treaty of marriage with the young Isabella, three stately pavilions were erected ; one for the French king, one for Richard, and a third, between them, for conference. On each side, from the outer pavilions to the central one, were placed four hundred knights, richly accoutred, with drawn swords in their hands : those on the English side being covered with the arms of England, and those on the other side with the arms

of France, splendidly embroidered on their surcoats.

So, when Henry V. met the King of France, to conclude the peace, which made Henry master of France, and to settle his marriage with the princess Catharine, three pavilions were erected. Henry's pavilion was of blue and green velvet, richly embroidered with two devices of antelopes and a motto; and on the top was a large golden eagle, the eyes of which were formed with brilliant diamonds. The pavilion of the French monarch was of blue velvet, embroidered with *fleurs de lis*; and on the top was a silver hart, flying, with enamelled wings. The intermediate tent, for consultation, was of purple velvet.

The citizens of London, imitating the example of their sovereigns, took every opportunity of testifying their loyalty by magni-

ficent shows. Having offended Richard II. they went out to meet him at Blackheath, as he and his queen were going to Westminster, and entreated him to pass through London ; to which, after some hesitation, he consented. About four hundred citizens, dressed in one livery, and well mounted on horseback, conducted the royal party to London bridge, where two beautiful horses, in trappings of rich cloth of gold, were presented to Richard and his consort. On these they rode, in grand cavalcade, to the standard in Cheapside ; the inhabitants of the city standing on either side of the streets in their liveries, and saluting the king as he passed with shouts of “ King Richard ! ” The windows and walls of the houses were hung with rich tapestry and cloths of Arras. At the standard, he found a sumptuous stage, on which sat divers personages,

in rich apparel ; among them was the representative of an angel, who set a crown of gold, garnished with precious stones and pearls, upon the king's head, and another on the queen's, as they passed by.

But this was nothing to the reception which Henry V. met with, on his return after the battle of Azincourt and the conquest of France. The mayor and aldermen, with about twenty thousand citizens, met the king on Blackheath, and conducted him to London, where “ he was royally received with procession and song,” in which he was styled “ Lord of England ! Flower of the World ! Soldier of Christ ! ” On the drawbridge of London Bridge, he found two turrets and a huge giant. The latter invited him to enter the city, while a company of imitative angels within the turrets sang, “ Blessed is he who cometh in the name

of the Lord !” When he entered London, he found the streets hung with rich cloths ; and in Cornhill was a royal tower, filled with personifications of the patriarchs, chanting “ Sing unto the Lord a new song ; praise His name in the holy church !” and they threw out living birds, which flew about the king. In Cheapside, the conduits ran with wine, instead of water (a common practice on such occasions), and on the great conduit were persons representing the twelve apostles, singing “ Have mercy on me, O Lord !” while twelve others, habited as kings, cast down oblations, to welcome him. At the Cross, in Cheapside, was a castle, decorated with banners, and in the towers were personifications of angels singing “ Noble ! Noble !” and presenting goblets of wine to the king. At Paul’s Cross, Henry was met by fourteen persons, robed and mitred as bishops,

carrying censers ; while all the bells rang for joy. Here Henry alighted from his horse, and went to the altar ; a solemn *Te Deum* was sung ; and afterwards he proceeded to his palace at Westminster.

The public entry into London of the young unfortunate Henry VI, on his return from Paris, where he had been crowned King of France, was graced with pageants, more numerous than usual, and in some instances they were truly impious. Fabian relates that “ the upper part of Cheapside was set out with trees and fountains pouring forth wine, in imitation of Paradise ; and at the conduit at Paul’s gate was a celestial throne, on which sat a pantomimic personification of God, surrounded by a multitude of angels singing and playing upon divers kinds of music. As the young king advanced towards this pageant, the representation of

Deity gave the angels charge concerning him, in rhyme, and also gave him assurances of long life, worldly prosperity and riches, loyalty from his subjects in either realm, a numerous offspring, and perpetuity of lineage." It is not a little remarkable, that all these promises were reversed in the history of this unhappy prince : he attained not the average standard of human life ; his affairs were uniformly unprosperous ; his subjects disaffected, both in England and in France ; and he had but one son, who was assassinated in the bloom of youth, and with him his lineage ended.

## DEPOSITIONS.

THE deposition of a king had its ceremonies, as well as his coronation. When Edward II. was deprived of regal power, he was brought into a room at Kenilworth Castle, amidst a great number of his enemies, and obliged to declare “that he was sorry the people should so much dislike his government; that he was very ready to resign his power; and hoped they would choose his son Edward to be king over them, in his stead.” This resignation being received, a knight, named William Trussell, spoke as follows:—“I, William Trussell, in the name of all the men of the land of England, and of all the parliament procurator, resign to thee, Edward, the homage



that was made to thee some time (ago); and from this time forward now following, I defy thee, and deprive thee of all royal power, and I shall never be attendant upon thee as king after this time." This being done, Sir Thomas Blunt, knight, steward of the household, by breaking his staff, resigned his office, and declared that the late king's family were discharged. The unhappy Edward was then removed to his prison, and soon afterwards underwent a horrible assassination.

So also, at the beginning of the troubles in the reign of Richard II. Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, and lord of the king's household, broke his white staff of office, and licensed all the king's servants to depart. And King Richard himself, when he was taken, made a forced resignation of his crown, before a great assembly of lords, at the Tower of London.

He was brought into the chamber, royally habited in his coronation robes, and with a rich bonnet on his head ; he held the crown and sceptre in his hands, which he resigned to the Duke of Lancaster, (Henry IV.) beseeching the lords, who were present, that they would accept “ his cousin, the Duke,” to be their king, in his stead. This resignation was taken down, and read in full parliament ; and the king was thenceforth deprived of royal power, as, shortly afterwards, he was of his life also.

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## MARTIAL EXERCISES.

TOURNAMENTS, which constituted the principal diversions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were a martial sport, or exercise, in which the ancient cavaliers displayed their bravery and address. The name is supposed to come from the French *tourner*, to turn round, because, to be expert in these exercises, much agility both of horse and man was requisite, they riding round in a ring, in imitation of the ancient circus. The first tournaments were merely courses on horseback, wherein a number of cavaliers tilted at each other with canes, in the manner of lances ; and were distinguished from *justs*, which were a kind of single combat of one man against another, with

blunted lances and swords. Though the justs were usually made in tournaments, after a general rencounter of all the cavaliers, yet they were sometimes distinct and independent of any tournament.

*Tilting*, or *running at the ring*, was also a very fashionable exercise, and evidently derived from the quintain, of which notice has been already taken. The excellency of this pastime was to ride at full speed, and thrust the point of a lance through the ring, which was supported in a case or sheath, by means of two springs, but might be readily drawn out by the force of the stroke, and remain upon the top of the lance. In tilting at the ring, three courses were allowed to each candidate; and he who thrust the point of his lance most frequently through it, or struck it, was the victor; but, if it so happened, that neither

was done, or the candidates were equally successful, the courses were repeated till one of them gained the superiority.

In the romantic ages, both *tournaments* and *justs* were held in the highest esteem: they were sanctioned by the countenance and example of the nobility, and prohibited to all below the rank of esquire. The justs, however, were considered as less honourable than the tournaments; for the knight who had paid his fees, and been admitted to the latter, had a right to engage in the former without any farther demand; but if he had only paid his fees for justing, he was not exempted from those for the tournament.

It is generally believed that the tournament originated from the childish pastime, practised by the Roman youths, called the *Troy Game*, which is said to have been brought into Italy,

soon after the Trojan war, by Ascanius, the son of Æneas, and seems to have consisted of a variety of evolutions performed on horseback: The same kind of sports, or others bearing a close resemblance to them, were established in this kingdom in the twelfth century, or perhaps earlier. At that time, it was customary for the young Londoners, every Sunday in Lent, immediately after dinner, to ride into the fields, on war-horses, in distinct bands, armed with shields and headless lances; and there they exhibited the representation of battles, and went through a variety of warlike exercises: at the same time, many of the young nobility, who had not received the honour of knighthood, came from the king's court, and from the houses of the great barons, to make trial of their skill in arms. The youth, divided into different companies, encountered each

other ; in one place they fled, in another pursued, without being able to overtake ; while, in a third, the pursuing bands overtook and defeated the fugitives.

From these exercises, the justs and tournaments arose by slow degrees. At first, the tournament consisted only in the knights running by turns at the quintain, and wheeling about successively in a circle to repeat their course. In process of time, to render the pastime more respectable, they ran at each other ; and, ultimately, they formed themselves into large parties, which, meeting together, combated with maces, or clubs, and beat each other soundly, without favour or respect to rank or dignity.

In the middle ages, when the tournaments were in their splendour, the Troy game was continued, though in a state of improvement,

and distinguished by a different denomination. It was then called, in Latin, *Behordicum*, and in French *Bohourt*, or *Behourt*, and was a kind of lance game, in which the young nobility exercised themselves, to acquire address in handling their arms, and to prove their strength. It was also called the *Cane Game*, because hollow canes were used instead of lances.

In the tournament, the champions depended equally upon their military skill and horsemanship and upon their bodily strength. It was at all times highly disgraceful to be unhorsed, by whatever exertion of the adversary it might be effected ; and he who, at the conclusion of the sports, had not met with this disaster, besides the honour he attained, sometimes received a pecuniary reward.

The *Just*, or *Lance game*, as already ob-



served, differed materially from the tournament, though frequently included in it, and usually took place when the grand tournamental conflict was finished. It was, nevertheless, perfectly consistent with the rules of chivalry, for justs to be held separately. In the time of Henry III. the just assumed a different appellation, and was also called the *Round Table Game*, from a fraternity of knights, who frequently justed with each other, and were accustomed to eat together in one apartment, where, in order to set aside all distinction of rank or quality, they were seated at a circular table, where every place was equally honourable. The institution of the *round table* is generally attributed to Prince Arthur, a celebrated British hero, whose achievements are so disguised with legendary wonders, that his very existence has been doubted. In the

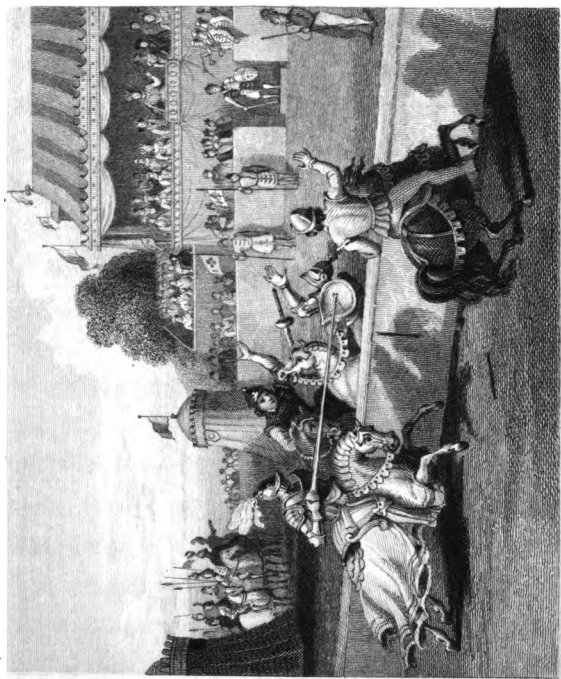
reign of Edward I. Roger de Mortimer, a nobleman of great opulence, established a round table at Kenilworth, for the encouragement of military pastimes; and there he entertained a hundred knights, with as many ladies, at his own expense. The fame of this institution occasioned a great influx of foreigners, who repaired to Kenilworth, either to initiate themselves, or give some public proof of their prowess: About seventy years afterwards, Edward III. erected a splendid table of the same kind at Windsor, upon a very extensive scale. This receptacle for military men gave continual occasion for the exercise of arms; and the example was followed by the King of France. This rivalry, by diverting the attention of the foreign nobility, some of whom repaired to Edward's institution, and others to that of the French monarch, had the

effect of destroying the establishment in both kingdoms ; and in England, the round table was superseded by the Order of the Garter, the ceremonial parts of which are still retained, though the spirit of the institution has evaporated with the change of manners.

The cessation of the round table occasioned little or no alteration respecting the justs, which had been practised by the knights belonging to it, and continued to be fashionable, till at length they superseded the tournaments.

In the justs, the combatants most commonly used spears deprived of their iron heads ; and the excellency of the performance consisted in striking the opponent upon the front of his helmet, so as to beat him backwards from his horse, or break the spear. Originally, they drove against each other, and endeavoured to





*Ensl.*

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unhorse their adversaries by the conflicting shock : but, in a more advanced age, a *barrier* was interposed, consisting of a strong boarded railing in the midst of the lists, but open at both ends, and between four and five feet in height. In performing the justs, the combatants rode on opposite sides of this barrier, and were thereby prevented from running their horses upon each other.

The privilege of distributing prizes and remitting the punishments of offenders, was, by the laws of the tournament, vested in the fair sex ; but at the justs the authority of the ladies was much more extensive. The justs were usually made in their honour : they presided as judges paramount over the sports, and their determinations were in all cases decisive.

At the celebration of these pastimes, the lists were superbly decorated, and surrounded

by the pavilions of the several champions, ornamented with their arms, banners, and bannerolls. The scaffolds for the reception of the nobility, who came as spectators, those especially which were appointed for the royal family, were hung with tapestry and embroideries of gold and silver : every person upon such occasions appeared to the greatest advantage, decked in sumptuous array ; and every part of the field presented to the eye a rich display of magnificence. To this may be added the splendid appearance of the knights engaged in the sports : themselves and their horses most gorgeously arrayed, as well as their esquires and pages, together with the minstrels and heralds who superintended the ceremonies, all of them being clothed in costly and glittering apparel. Such a display of pomp must have made a strong impression

on the mind, which was not a little heightened by the cries of the heralds, the clangour of the trumpets, the clashing of the arms, the rushing together of the combatants, and the shouts of the beholders : hence the popularity of these exhibitions, in an age when the attention was not diverted by commercial pursuits and speculations, may be easily accounted for.

The prince who published a tournament, used to send a king at arms, with a safe conduct and a sword, to all the princes, knights, &c. signifying that he intended "holding a tournament and a clashing of swords, in the presence of ladies and damsels." They first engaged man against man, then troop against troop ; and after the combat, the judges allotted the prize to the best cavalier and the best striker of swords, who was also conducted in pomp to the lady of the tournament.



Tournaments seem to have been first established by Henry the Fowler, Duke of Saxony, and afterwards Emperor, who died A. D. 936; they were introduced in France, by Geoffry, Lord of Priuli, about A.D. 1066; but they did not make their appearance in England till the reign of Stephen, about 1140. The great danger to which they exposed the combatants, and the serious affrays and real hostilities to which they gave rise, induced several popes to prohibit them, and such as were slain in them were, by the church canons, denied Christian burial. The kings of England, prior to Stephen, constantly refused to suffer them to be exercised within the realm; and after Stephen had admitted them, they were so much opposed, that Henry III. by the advice of his parliament, subjected such as, without special leave, should hold a tourna-

ment, to the forfeiture of their estates, and their children to disinheritance. Richard I. however, removed all these restrictions, and not only allowed the use of tournaments, but encouraged his nobility to practise them. After this period, especially in the time of Edward III. these diversions became familiar, and were performed, with extraordinary magnificence, in the Tilt-yard, near St. James's, in Smithfield, and various other places.

At these tournaments, &c. the usual method was for the knights to challenge all comers to perform so many courses with the lance, or so many blows with the sword, or the like. These warlike shows were generally succeeded, in the evening, by a superb banquet and mask, with dancing and other polite amusements.

## FIELD SPORTS.

THE sports and pastimes of the first rank, and the most noble, in this period, were the tournaments. Not that the passion for hunting, hawking, and other campaign amusements was abated; for these ancient sports were still pursued; and, instead of being confined, as formerly, to king and nobles, the Forest Charter signed by King John, and confirmed by his son Henry III. allowed every freeman to have, in his own woods, aviaries of hawks, sparrow-hawks, falcons, eagles, and herons; together with a right to all the money he might find upon his own premises. By the same charter, also, no man was from that time

to forfeit either his life or limbs for killing the king's deer ; though, if any man should be convicted of stealing venison belonging to the king, he should be subject to a heavy fine, and in default of payment be imprisoned for a year and a day, after which he should find security for his good behaviour, or be sent into banishment.

The animals of the chase were the hare, the hart, the buck, the roebuck, the doe, the wild boar, the fox, the wolf, the marten-cat, the polecat, the *grey* or badger, and the otter.

Hawking, as well as hunting, was an ancient, as well as a principal amusement with the English. A person of rank scarcely stirred out without his hawk on his fist, which in old paintings is the criterion of nobility. The object of this sport was the capture of wild fowls by means of hawks trained to the exer-


cise with much trouble, expense, and ingenuity. This diversion was the pride of the rich, and the privilege of the poor; for no rank of men seems to have been excluded from it. In some ancient books are given lists of the different kinds of hawks to be used by the several classes of the community, from the emperor down to the knave, or serving man. Vast was the expense that sometimes attended this sport; and the rigour of the laws for its conservation was quite commensurate. In the 34th year of Edward III. it was made felony to steal a hawk; and to take its eggs, even upon a person's own grounds, was punishable with imprisonment for a year and a day, besides a fine, at the king's pleasure. In Elizabeth's reign, the imprisonment was reduced to three months; but the offender was to find security for seven years, or re-

main in prison till he did. Such was then the state of *Old England* !

During the whole day, the gentry were addicted to hawking or hunting; it being then “thought sufficient for noblemen to wind their horn, and to carry their hawk fair, and leave study and learning to the children of mean people;” in the evening, they celebrated their exploits with the most abandoned and brutish sottishness; while the inferior rank of people, by the most unjust and arbitrary laws, were liable to capital punishments, to fines, and loss of liberty, for destroying the most noxious of the feathered tribe.

Henry VIII. was passionately fond of this amusement; and on one occasion it had nearly proved fatal to him; for, as he was following his hawk on foot, near Hitching, he attempted to leap over a ditch with a pole; but the pole

broke, and if one Edmond Mody had not leaped into the water and raised his head, which was fast in the clay, he would have been drowned.



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## THE DRAMA.

THE precise time when theatrical amusements were introduced into England is unknown: very early in the Norman period, they are thus spoken of: "The interludes belonging to the theatre were plays of holy subjects, representing the miracles wrought by the saints, with the acts and pious sufferings of the blessed martyrs." And as these representations are not described as being new or uncommon, we may justly conclude them to be of a date still more ancient.

## MIRACLES, OR MYSTERIES.

IN the twelfth century, these exhibitions were called *Miracles*; the *church* was usually the *theatre* wherein they were performed; and the actors were the ecclesiastics, or their scholars. The first play of this kind, known to be specified by name, is called *Saint Catherine*; written by Geoffrey, a Norman, afterwards Abbot of St. Alban's, who first taught at Dunstable, about A.D. 1110, where he caused his play to be performed, and borrowed from the sacrist of St. Alban's some of the ecclesiastical vestments of the abbey, to adorn the actors.

In these mysteries, the authors and actors hesitated not to personate the most holy and sacred characters, not excepting the Persons of the Godhead. In a mystery, called *God's Promises*, the principal character is *Pater*



*Cælestis*, the Heavenly Father; and in the celebrated mystery, entitled, *Corpus Christi*, or *The Coventry Play*, God and Lucifer are the principal dramatis personæ.

The prologue to this curious drama is delivered by three persons, who speak alternately, and are styled *Vexillators*: it contains the argument of the several *pageants*, or *acts*, which constitute the piece, and amount to no less than forty, each consisting of a detached subject from holy writ, beginning with the creation of the universe, and ending with the general judgement. In the first pageant, or act, the Deity is represented seated on His throne by Himself, and declaring His self-existence and eternity, His omnipotence, and His triune essence. This speech is of some length; and at its conclusion the angels enter, chanting from the church service, “To Thee

all angels cry aloud ; the heavens and all the powers therein : To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." Lucifer then makes his appearance, and desires to know if the hymn they had sung was in honour of God or of him ? The good angels readily reply, that it was in honour of God ; but the evil angels incline to worship Lucifer, and he presumes to seat himself in the throne of the Deity. God immediately commands him to fall from heaven to hell ; which dreadful sentence he is compelled to obey ; and, with his wicked associates, he descends to the lower regions. The play then goes on ; the next pageant being the Creation of the World ; and the others follow in regular succession : as many pageants being played each day as the time would permit, till the whole drama was gone

through. This play was acted by the Friars Minors, or Mendicant Friars, of Coventry, and commenced on Corpus Christi Day, whence it received its title.

Dugdale says, for the performance of these plays, theatres were erected for the several scenes, very large and high, and moving upon wheels, by which they were drawn to all the eminent parts of the city, for the better advantage of the spectators.

The stage at this time consisted of three several platforms or stages, one above the other. On the uppermost sat the *Pater Cælestis*, surrounded with His angels; on the second appeared the holy saints and glorified men; and the lowest was occupied by mere men who had not yet passed from time into eternity. On one side of the lowest platform was the resemblance of a dark pitchy cavern,

from whence issued the appearance of fire and flames ; and, when it was necessary, the audience were treated with hideous yellings and noises, imitative of the howlings and cries of wretched souls tormented by relentless dæmons. From this yawning cave, the devils themselves constantly ascended, to delight and instruct the spectators ; to *delight*, because they were usually the greatest jesters and buffoons that then appeared ; and to *instruct*, by warning all men carefully to avoid falling into the clutches of such hardened and remorseless spirits. In the more improved state of the theatre, when regular plays were introduced, all this mummary was abolished ; and the cavern, with the devils, together with the upper platform, were taken away, two platforms only being left. These continued a considerable time in use, the upper stage serv-

ing for chambers, or any elevated situations, (as when some of the actors should, from the walls of a city, or the like, discourse with those who were standing on the lower platform :) this appears from several entries to be found in the old editions of the first plays, where mention is often made of the *upper* and *lower* stages.

The mysteries often consisted of single subjects making but one performance ; as, the *Conversion of St. Paul* ; which is the title of one still in existence.

In the Harleian Library are two manuscript copies of a very ancient mystery, or rather an assemblage of mysteries, called the *Plays of Chester* ; the oldest is dated 1600, and prefixed to the prologue is an entry of a proclamation for Whitsun Plays, made by Wm. Newal, Clerk of the Pendice, in the 24th year

of Henry VIII. from which it appears that the pope had granted “ a thousand days of pardon,” to which the bishop of Chester had added *forty days’ pardon, to every person resorting in peaceable manner, with good devotion, to hear and see the said plays* ; and that every person disturbing them was *accursed* by the authority of the Pope !

“ In the days of ceremonial religion,” says Lambarde, “ they used (at Witney, in Oxfordshire) to set forth yearly, in manner of a show, or interlude, the resurrection of our Lord, &c. for the which purposes, and the more lively hereby to exhibit to the eye the whole action of the resurrection, the priests garnished out certain small puppets, representing the person of Christ, the watchmen, Mary, and others ; amongst the which, one bore the part of a waking watchman, who espying Christ to

arise, made a continual noise, like to the sound that is caused by the meeting of two sticks ; and was therefore commonly called *Jack Snacker of Witney*."

Notwithstanding the seriousness of the subject, which constituted these mysteries, they were not without a portion of pantomimical fun, to make them palatable to the vulgar taste ; indeed, the length and dulness of the speeches required some such assistance to enliven them, and keep the auditory in good humour ; and this may be the reason why the mysteries are in general much shorter than modern plays. Beelzebub seems to have been the principal comic actor, assisted by his merry troop of under-devils, who, with variety of noises, strange gestures, and contortions of the body, excited the laughter of the populace.

These ecclesiastical plays, as already observed, were usually performed in churches or chapels, upon temporary scaffolds erected for the purpose ; and sometimes, when a sufficient number of clerical actors were not to be procured, the churchwardens and chief parishioners caused them to be acted by secular players, in order to collect money for defraying the church expenses ; and, in many instances, they borrowed the theatrical apparel from other parishes, when they had none of their own.

The acting of plays in churches was much declaimed against by the religious writers of the sixteenth century ; and Bonner, Bishop of London, in the thirty-third year of Henry VIII. issued a proclamation to the clergy of his diocese, prohibiting all manner of common plays, games, or interludes, to be played, set



forth, or declared, within their churches or chapels.

In Cornwall, the miracle plays, or mysteries, were differently represented: they were neither performed in the churches, nor under cover, but in the open air. “The *guary miracle*,” (in English, a miracle play,) says Carew, “is a kind of interlude, compiled in Cornish, out of some scripture history. For representing it, they raise an earthen amphitheatre, in some open field, having the diameter of this enclosed plain some forty or fifty feet. The country people flock from all sides, many miles off, to see and hear it; for they have therein devils, and devices to delight as well the eye as the ear. The players con (repeat) not their parts without book, but are prompted by one, called the *ordinary*, who followeth at their backs with the book in his

hand, and telleth them what to say." A miracle play of this kind, preserved in the Harleian Library, commences with the Creation, and ends with the Deluge. Noah himself concludes the play with an address to the spectators, desiring them "to come to-morrow betimes," to see another play on the "Redemption of Man;" and then, speaking to the musicians, he says, "Musicians, play to us, that we may dance together, as is the manner of the sport."

Such a ridiculous jumble of religion and buffoonery might well excite the indignation of serious people: yet this species of entertainment continued to be exhibited in Cornwall long after the abolition of the *Miracles* and *Moralities* in other parts of the kingdom, and when the establishment of regular plays had taken place.

## MORALITIES.

THE Mysteries, or Miracle Plays, by degrees, fell into disrepute, till at length they gave place to another species of entertainment, called *Moralities*, consisting of moral reasonings in praise of virtue, and condemnation of vice. These performances required some degree of invention, and laid the foundation for modern tragedies and comedies. The dialogues, which contained something of poetry, were carried on by allegorical characters, as *Good Doctrine*, *Charity*, *Faith*, *Prudence*, *Discretion*, *Death*, and such like : and their discourses were of a serious cast. But the province of making the spectators merry, descended from the *devil*, in the Mystery, to *Vice*, or *Iniquity*, in the Morality, who usually personified some bad quality incident to hu-

man nature, as *pride, drunkenness, &c.* and was dressed in a peculiar habit, with a wooden dagger, or long pole, in his hand, with which, according to a stage direction still extant, he was “to lay about him lustily, and tumble the characters one over the other, with great noise and riot, *for disport sake.*” Even when regular tragedies and comedies were introduced on the stage, the descendants of this facetious *Iniquity* may be traced in the *clowns* and the *fools*, which too frequently disgrace them; and in modern pantomimes, his family likeness is still to be observed in *Harlequin, Punch*, and their ultra-natural associates.

## SECULAR PLAYS AND INTERLUDES.

THE plays, hitherto spoken of, differed materially from the *secular plays* and *interludes*, which were acted by strolling companies, com-

posed of minstrels, jugglers, tumblers, dancers, *bourdours*, or jesters, and other performers, properly qualified for the different parts of the entertainment, which admitted of a variety of exhibitions. These pastimes are of higher antiquity than the ecclesiastical plays, and were much relished, not only by the common people, but also by the nobility. The courts of the kings of England, and the castles of the great earls and barons, were crowded with performers of the *Secular Plays*, where they were well received, and handsomely rewarded. The vast sums of money which were lavished upon these secular itinerants, induced the monks and other ecclesiastics to turn actors themselves, in order to obtain a share of the public bounty. But, to give the best colouring to their undertaking, they took the subjects of their dialogues from holy writ, and performed

them in the churches. A "mortal strife" now commenced between the two parties: the clerical showmen, finding their secular rivals retained their popularity, diligently endeavoured to bring them into disgrace, by preaching and writing against their exhibitions. On the other hand, the secular players made no scruple of imitating the churchmen, and performing their mysteries, or others similar to them.

Generally speaking, however, the secular plays had nothing to do with religion, and very little with morality; being calculated chiefly to promote vulgar mirth, without any view to instruction. They consisted of comic tales, dialogues, and stories, intermixed with coarse jests: with the addition of instrumental music, singing, dancing, tumbling, gesticulation, and mimickry, to excite laughter, with-

out the least regard to decency ; and for this reason, the clergy were prohibited from going to see them.

These players often exhibited their performances upon temporary scaffolds, even as late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In a treatise written at that time, "Against Dicing, Vain Plays, or Interludes," the author says, "they are called *Histriones*, or rather *Histrices*, which play, upon scaffolds and stages, interludes and comedies ;" he applies to them the opprobrious terms of "jugglers, scoffers, jesters, and players;" and ranks them with the lowest and most vicious of mankind.

Soon after the production of regular plays, when proper theatres were established, the motley exhibitions of the strolling actors were only the means of amusing the lowest orders ; the law set its face against them ; the performers

were stigmatized with the names of *rogues* and *vagabonds* ; and, so early as the sixth year of Edward III. it was ordained by parliament, that they should be whipped out of London, because they represented scandalous things in little alehouses, and other places where the populace assembled.

## PUPPET SHOWS.

WHEN all access was denied to these itinerants at the houses of the opulent, they were forced to depend upon the precarious support of the lower classes of the people, which was insufficient to enable them to appear with their former credit. Their companies were unavoidably divided ; their performances became less worthy of notice ; and every one endeavoured to shift for himself in the best manner he could ; or, a few of them uniting



their abilities, as occasion might serve, exhibited at wakes and fairs, living upon the contributions of rustics and children. The *tragi-tour* now became a mere *juggler*, or *conjuror*, and played a few paltry tricks occasionally, assisted by the *bourdour* or *jester*, transformed into a modern *jack-pudding*, or *merry-andrew*. It is highly probable, that necessity, the mother of invention, suggested to him the idea of supplying the places of his former confederates by automaton figures, constructed of wood, which, by means of wires, were moved about, and made to imitate many of the actions peculiar to mankind. These puppets, with the assistance of speeches made for them behind the scenery, produced that species of drama, commonly distinguished by the title of a *Droll*, or *Puppet-show*. Here a facetious performer, well known by the name of *Punchinello*, or

*Punch*, as he is called in modern times, supplied the place of the *Vice*, or mirth-maker; and as, in the *Moralities*, the *Iniquity*, or *Evil*, was usually carried away at the end of the drama, by Satan, so Punchinello, the genuine descendant of the *Iniquity*, after he has beaten all the other actors off the stage, is himself carried away by the same demon.

Previous to the incorporation of puppets into companies, there were single automaton, that performed a variety of motions: the famous *rood*, or crucifix, at Boxley, in Kent, was a figure of this kind, which moved its eyes, and turned its head, whenever the monkish miracle-workers required its assistance. The *Jack of the clock house*, often mentioned by writers of the sixteenth century, was also an automaton, which either struck the hours upon the bell, in their proper rotation, or signified

by its gestures that the clock was about to strike.

The subjects of the puppet dramas were usually taken from some well-known popular stories, with the introduction of knights and giants : such as *Jack and the Bean Stalk*, *Blue Beard*, &c. In later times, these shows consisted of a wretched display of wooden figures, barbarously formed, and decorated without the least degree of taste or propriety ; and the dialogues were mere jumbles of absurdity and nonsense, intermixed with low colloquies between Punch and the fiddler ; which last generally constituted the whole of the orchestra.

The introduction, or revival, of pantomimes at the superior theatres, totally ruined the puppet-show men. In fact, all the absurdities of the puppet-show, except the discourses, are retained in the pantomimes ; the difference

consisting chiefly in the substitution of living actors for wooden puppets. It has therefore happened, that in the present day, the puppet-show man travels about the streets, when the weather will permit, and carries his motions, with the theatre itself, upon his back ! The exhibition takes place in the open air ; and the precarious income of the miserable itinerant depends entirely on the voluntary contributions of the spectators, which, from the squalid appearance he usually makes, may be considered as very trifling.

Towards the close of the last century, a puppet-show was exhibited at the court end of the town, and at Ranelagh, under the Italian title of *Fantocini*, which greatly attracted the attention of the public ; it was, however, no more than a puppet-show, with the motions constructed upon better principles, the figures

dressed with more elegance, and managed with greater art, than was the case with the exhibitions of their contemporaries “the noted” Jobson, Flockton, Gyngeell, &c. names which are not yet out of memory.

As an improvement upon these, may be noticed Mr. Hammond’s *Androïdes*, exhibited, about thirty years since, in Norfolk-street, Strand, and Maillardet’s *Mechanical Exhibition*, at Spring Gardens ; in both these, each puppet moved by means of mechanism contained within itself, without the extraneous aid of wires ; and after it had been wound up, it would perform many surprising acts, as drawing, writing, playing on the piano-forte, &c.

Another species of scenic exhibition, with moving figures, appeared at the commencement of the seventeenth century ; and con-

sisted of flat painted images moving upon a flat surface, like those frequently seen upon the tops of clocks, where a carpenter's shop, a stone-mason's yard, a ship sailing, &c. are represented. This is usually denominated *clock-work*, from the actuating power. Of this kind was the celebrated *Moving Picture* of the camp before Lisle, exhibited in the reign of Queen Anne, and Pinkethman's *Pantheon*, mentioned in the *Spectator*. Imitations of these are still to be seen at every fair, for the small charge of a penny or two-pence.

## LUDI, OR COURT PLAYS.

DIFFERENT from all these entertainments were the *Ludi*, or plays, exhibited at court during the Christmas holidays. These may be traced as far back as the reign of Edward III. and as the preparations then made for

them are spoken of without the least intimation of novelty, it may be supposed that they were still more ancient. From the enumeration of the dresses appropriated to one of these entertainments, which consisted of various kinds of disguises, they seem to have merited rather the denomination of *Mummeries*, than of theatrical divertisements. How far they were enlivened by dialogue or interlocutory eloquence, is not known ; but, probably, they partook more of the feats of pantomime than of colloquial excellency, and were better calculated to amuse the sight than instruct the mind. In the wardrobe rolls of Edward III. A.D. 1348, is an account of the dresses for furnishing the plays, or sports, of the king, held in the castle of Guildford, at the feast of Christmas, as follow : “ 80 tunics of buckram, of various colours ; 42 vizors, of various simi-

litudes, namely, 14 of faces of women, 14 of faces of men, with beards, 14 of heads of angels, made with silver; 28 crests; 14 mantles, embroidered with the heads of dragons; 14 white tunics, wrought with heads and wings of peacocks; 14 with heads of swans, with wings; 14 tunics, painted with eyes of peacocks: 14 tunics of English linen, painted; and 14 tunics, embroidered with stars of gold and silver."

## MUMMINGS.

IN the middle ages, *Mummings* were common; and at court, as well as in the mansions of the nobility, on festival occasions, the whole company would appear in borrowed characters; and, as full licence of speech was granted, the discourses were not always restrained within the bounds of propriety. In the year



1377, the citizens of London, at the feast of Christmas, made a *mumming*, to please the young prince Richard, son of Edward the Black Prince (afterwards Richard II.) in the following manner: "On the Sunday before Christmas, (A. D. 1377,) in the night, one hundred and thirty citizens, disguised and well horsed, in a mummary, with sound of trumpets, sackbuts, cornets, shalms, and other minstrelsy, and innumerable torch-lights of wax, rode from Newgate, through Cheapside, over the bridge, through Southwark, and so to Kennington, beside Lambeth, where the young prince remained with his mother and the duke of Lancaster his uncle, the earls of Cambridge, Hereford, Warwick, Suffolk, and divers other lords. In the first rank rode forty-eight, in the likeness and habit of esquires, two and two together, clothed in red coats, and gowns





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*Mummings.*

of say, or sendall, with comely vizors on their faces. After them came riding forty-eight knights, in the same livery of colour and stuff; then followed one richly arrayed, like an emperor; and after him, at some distance, one stately attired, like a pope, who was followed by twenty-four cardinals; and after them eight or ten with black vizors, not amiable, as if they had been legates from some foreign princes. These maskers, after they had entered the manor of Kennington, alighted from their horses, and entered the hall on foot; which done, the prince, his mother, and the lords, came out of the chamber into the hall, whom the mummers did salute, shewing by a pair of dice upon the table, their desire to play with the young prince, which they so handled that the prince did always win when he cast at them. Then the mummers set to

the prince three jewels, one after another, which were a bowl of gold, a cup of gold, and a ring of gold, which the prince won at three casts. Then they set to the prince's mother, the duke, the earls, and other lords, to every one a ring of gold, which they did also win. After which they were feasted, and the music sounded, the prince and lords danced on the one part with the mummers, who did also dance; which jollity being ended, they were again made to drink, and then departed in order as they came."

A similar entertainment was given to Henry IV. in the second year of his reign. He then kept his Christmas at Eltham, whither "twelve aldermen of London, and their sons, rode in a mumming, and had great thanks."

These spectacles were exhibited with great splendour, particularly during the reign of

Henry VIII. and from them arose the modern masquerade.

Mummings were also the common holiday amusements among young people, both in town and country. Those practised by the lower classes, usually took place during the Christmas holidays ; and such as could not procure masks, rubbed their faces over with soot, or painted them. The numerous abuses, however, that were committed under the sanction of these disguisements, occasioned an ordinance in the third year of Henry VIII. by which all persons were prohibited from appearing abroad like mummers, with their faces covered with vizors, and in disguised apparel, under pain of three months' imprisonment ; and a penalty of twenty shillings was inflicted upon such as kept vizors in their houses, for the purpose of mumming. The

only traces we have left of this kind of amusement are to be found among the chimney-sweepers on May-day.

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## CHRISTMAS GAMBOLS.

A KIND of mumming was long practised in the North, about Christmas time, which consisted in the interchange of dress between men and women, who “when dressed in each other’s clothes, went from one neighbour’s house to another, to partake of their Christmas cheer, and make merry with them in disguise, by dancing and singing, and such like merri-ments.” This was probably a relic of the old *Saturnalia*, celebrated towards the close of December, when masters and slaves exchanged places, the latter assuming the dress of the

former, and sitting down to table, while their masters, habited as slaves, waited upon them, and obeyed their commands.

Of the same character with these mummers was the *Mock Prince*, or *Lord of Misrule*, whose reign extended through the greater part of the Christmas holidays, and whose province it was to be foremost in contriving mirth and delight, for the pastime of the guest; while the loin of beef, and other large joints, with huge puddings, smoked upon the table. This important personage, who is sometimes called the *Abbot of Misrule*, and is considered by foreign writers as almost peculiar to England, had the sanction of royal authority; but his government has been extinct for many years, and his name and offices are now nearly forgotten. “At the feast of Christmas,” says Stow, “in the king’s court,



wherever he chanced to reside, there was appointed a *Lord of Misrule*, or *Master of merry disports*: the same merry fellow made his appearance at the house of every nobleman and person of distinction ; and, among the rest, the Lord Mayor of London and the sheriffs had severally their Lord of Misrule (afterwards called the *Lord Mayor's Fool*), ever contending, without quarrel or offence, who should make the rarest pastime to delight the beholders. This pageant potentate began his rule at Allhallow eve (31st October), and continued the same till the morrow after the feast of the Purification (3d February); in which space there were fine and subtle disguisings, masks, and mummeries."

In the fifth year of Edward VI. at Christmas time, a gentleman named George Ferrers, a

lawyer, poet, and historian, was appointed by the council to bear this office ; and he, says Holinshed, “ being of better calling than commonly his predecessors had been, received all his commissions and warrants by the name of *Master of the King's Pastimes* ;” and he so well supplied his office, “ both of show of sundry sights, and devices of rare invention, and in acts of divers interludes, and matters of pastimes, played by persons, as not only satisfied the common sort, but also were very well liked and allowed by the council and others of skill in like pastimes ; but best by the young king himself, as appeared by his princely liberality in rewarding that service.”

This “ master of merry disports ” was not confined to the court, nor to the houses of the opulent ; he was also elected in various pa-

ishes, and was sometimes president over the summer sports as well as of the Christmas gambols.

The society belonging to Lincoln's-Inn had anciently an officer, chosen at this season, who was honoured with the title of *King of Christmas Day*, because he presided in the hall on that day. This temporary potentate had a marshal and a steward to attend upon him. The marshal, in the absence of the monarch, was permitted to assume his state ; and upon New-year's day he sat as king in the hall, when the *Master of the Revels*, during the dinner-time, supplied the marshal's place. Upon Childermas day, they had another officer, denominated *King of the Cockneys*, who also presided on the day of his appointment, and had his inferior officers to wait upon him.

A pageant was exhibited at Norwich, on Shrove Tuesday, in which a man rode through the streets on a horse “trapped with tin foil and other nice disguisings, crowned as *King of Christmas*, in token that the *season* should end with the twelve months of the year; and before him went each month disguised as the season required.”

Of equal importance with the dignified personages above spoken of, was the *King of the Bean*, whose reign commenced upon the vigil of the Epiphany, or upon the day itself, usually called *Twelfth-day*. It was a common Christmas gambol, in both our universities, as well as in other places, to give the name of *King* or *Queen* to the person who happened to hit upon that part of a divided cake, in which a bean was concealed. In an old Romish calendar, it is directed, that on the fifth of

January, *the vigil of the Epiphany*, the kings of the bean shall be created ; and on the sixth, the feast of the kings shall be held, and also of the queens ; and the banqueting shall be continued many days.

The reader will readily trace the vestige of this custom, though somewhat differently managed, and without the bean, in the modern custom of drawing for king and queen upon Twelfth night.

But of all the mummeries which branched out of the original stock of the heathen *Saturnalia*, and were grafted upon the stem of Christianity, none was more daringly impious and outrageous to common sense, than the *Festival of Fools*, in which the most sacred rites and ceremonies of the church were turned into ridicule ; the ecclesiastics themselves participating in the abominable profa-

nations. In each of the cathedral churches, a *Bishop*, or an *Archbishop*, of *Fools* was elected; and in the churches immediately dependent upon the papal see, a *Pope of Fools*. These mock pontiffs had usually a proper suite of ecclesiastics, who attended upon them, and assisted at the divine service, most of them attired in dresses resembling pantomimical players and buffoons. They were accompanied by large crowds of laity, some disguised with masks of a monstrous fashion, to frighten the beholders; others having their faces smutted, to excite laughter.

These spectacles were always exhibited at Christmas time, or near to it; though they were not confined to one particular day. When the ceremony took place on St. Stephen's day, they sang, as part of the mass, a burlesque composition, called the *Prose of the*

*Ass*, or the *Fool's Prose* ; it was performed by a double choir, and at intervals, by way of burden, the braying of an ass was imitated. On the festival of St. John the Evangelist, they used another arrangement of ludicrous sentences, denominated the *Prose of the Ox*, but no better than the other.

These ceremonies, so offensive to decency, and outrageous to every pious mind, were suppressed in England at so early a period, that it is uncertain whether they ever reached that degree of profaneness which they attained on the Continent, where they continued longer in use. The office of *King of the Fools* was prohibited in England in the reign of Richard II. A.D. 1391, but the election and investment of a *Boy Bishop*, which was derived from the Festival of Fools, was continued till the time of Henry VIII. In all the collegiate

churches, at the feast of St. Nicholas, or of the Holy Innocents, and frequently at both, it was customary for one of the children of the choir, completely apparelled in the episcopal vestments, with a mitre and crosier, to bear the title and state of a bishop. He exacted a ceremonial obedience from his fellows, who, dressed as priests, took possession of the church, and performed all the ceremonies and offices, which might have been celebrated by a bishop and his prebendaries. After performing divine service, this boy bishop and his associates went about to different parts of the town, and visited religious houses, collecting money. These ceremonies and processions were formally abrogated by proclamation from the king and council, in the thirty-third year of Henry VIII. A.D. 1542: but were revived by his daughter Mary, in the second



year of whose reign an edict was issued from the bishop of London to all the clergy of his diocese, to have a "boy bishop" in procession. The year following, "the child bishop of Paul's church, with his company," were admitted into the queen's privy chamber, where he sang before her, on St. Nicholas' day and upon Holy Innocents' day. "In the next year," says Strype, "on St. Nicholas' even, *Saint Nicholas*, that is, a boy habited like a bishop, went abroad in most parts of London, singing after the old fashion; and was received by many ignorant but well-disposed persons into their houses, and had as much good cheer as ever was wont to be had before." After the death of Mary, this silly mummary was totally discontinued.

Cards, dice, tables, and most other games prohibited by the public statutes at other seasons of the year, were tolerated during the

Christmas holidays, as well as disguisements and mummings; and in some parts of the kingdom vestiges of these customs are still to be met with. In the north, at Christmas time, the *Fool Plough* still goes about: a pageant, consisting of a number of sword dancers dragging a plough, with music, and one, or sometimes two, attired in a very antic dress, as the *Bessy*, in the grotesque habit of an old woman, and the *Fool*, almost covered with skins, with a hairy cap on his head, and the tail of some animal hanging down his back. The office of one of these characters is to go rattling a box among the spectators of the dance, to collect their donations. The term *Fool Plough* seems to be a corruption of *Yule Plough*; *Yule* being an ancient name among the Saxons for Christmas, derived from the Greek; hence *Yule Games*, or, by contraction

*Yu Games*, for Christmas gambols ; *Yule-day* for Christmas day ; *Yule-log*, or *Yu-log*, for a Christmas log, &c. From the same origin may also be derived the *Pope*, *Bishop*, *King*, &c. of *Fools*, otherwise *Yules*, or *Christmas* ; and the *Festival of Fools* resolves itself into the more rational designation of the *Feast of Yules*, or Christmas festivity.

The *Fool*, or *Yule Plough* is sometimes called the *White Plough* ; because the young men who compose the pageant are dressed in white shirts, with a great number of ribbands, folded into roses and other devices, loosely stitched upon them. These shirts, on account of the coldness of the season, are put on over the waistcoat and jacket. In some places, where the pageant is retained, they plough up the ground before any house where they receive no contribution. This pageant gives name to

the first Monday after the Epiphany, which is called Plough Monday; and even in places where the pageant is not kept up, the day is considered as the ploughman's holiday, and they collect from their neighbours what is called the *plough money*, for the purchase of drink.

The *wassail bowl*, filled with spiced ale, was formerly carried about by young women, on New Year's eve: they went from door to door, in their several parishes, singing a few couplets of homely verses, composed for the purpose, and presented the liquor to the inmates, expecting a small gratuity in return, called the *New Year's Gift*. The *wassail* is said to have originated from the words of Rowena, daughter of Hengist, the Saxon, who, presenting a bowl of wine to Vortigern, king of the Britons, said WÆS HÆL, or *Health to you, my*

*lord the king.* Some vestiges of the *wassails* are still remaining in Cornwall, but the time of their performance is changed to Twelfth-day.

## MASQUES.

THE magnificent pageants and disguisings, exhibited at court, from the time of Henry IV. and especially during the reign of Henry VIII. appear to have originated from the Ludi, or Mumblings, in which the chief aim was to surprise the spectators "by the ridiculous and exaggerated oddity of the vizors, and by the singularity and splendour of the dresses ; and frequently the masque was accompanied with an exhibition of gorgeous machinery, resembling the wonders of a modern pantomime."

"In the fifth year of the reign of Henry VIII." says Hall, "his majesty kept his Christ-





*Mosques*

mas at Greenwich ; and on Twelfth Night there came into the great hall, a mount, called *the rich mount*. This mount was set full of rich flowers of silk, and especially of broom slips, full of pods ; the branches were of green satin, and the flowers flat gold of damask, which signified *Plantagenet* : on the top stood a goodly beacon giving light ; round above the beacon sat the king and five others, all in coats and caps of right crimson velvet, embroidered with flat gold of damask, their coats set full of spangles of gold ; and four *wodehouses* (men dressed up in skins, or rugs, so as to resemble savages) drew the mount, till it came before the queen, and then the king and his company descended and danced. Then suddenly the mount opened, and out came six ladies, all in crimson satin and plunket, embroidered with gold and pearl, with French hoods on



their heads, and they danced alone. Then the lords of the mount took the ladies, and they danced together. The ladies then re-entered ; the mount closed, and was conveyed out of the hall."

It was about this time, or rather earlier, that plays, consisting of dialogues, became the fashionable diversion at court. Leland, speaking of Henry the Seventh's Christmas, A.D. 1489, says, "I saw no disguisings, and but right few plays ; but there was an *Abbot of Misrule* that made much sport," &c. And again : "At night the king, the queen, and my lady the king's mother, came into the White Hall, and there heard a play."

Henry VIII. in the 13th year of his reign, entertained the emperor at Windsor, with a disguising, or play, on Sunday evening. The purport of this play was, that "there was a

proud horse, which would not be tamed nor bridled ; but Friendship sent Prudence and Policy, who tamed him, and Force and Power bridled him. By this horse was intended the French king ; by Friendship, the king of England and the Emperor ; and the other persons were their counsel and power. After this play was ended, there was a sumptuous mask of twelve men and twelve women." In the following year, " Two persons played a dialogue before the king, the effect whereof was, whether riches were better than love ?" And when they could not agree, each called in three knights, all armed ; three of them would have entered the gate of the arch in the middle of the chamber, but the other three resisted ; and suddenly, between the six knights, out of the arch fell down a gilt bar, at the which the six knights fought a fair battle, and then

departed. Then came in an old man, with a silver beard, and he concluded that love and riches both be necessary for a prince; that is to say, by love to be obeyed and served, and with riches to reward his lovers and friends: and with this conclusion the dialogue ended." Hence it appears that these dialogues were not only part of the entertainment, but also ingeniously made the vehicle for the introduction of other sports.

This kind of dialogue, interlude, or masque, was continued even after the introduction of the regular plays, the most ancient of which, intitled *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, is said to have been written A.D. 1517. They were generally composed by the chief poets, and played by the courtiers themselves, with as little sense of indecorum as they now experience from mixing in the merry dance. Ben

Jonson wrote several of these masques, as well for the diversion of the king and queen, as for the entertainment of the nobility at their marriages, or some other particular occasion.

## THE COVENTRY PLAY.

AMONG the pastimes exhibited for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth, during her stay at Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire, was a kind of historical play, performed by certain persons who came for the purpose from Coventry. The subject was the Massacre of the Danes, a memorable event in English history, and expressed in action and in rhymes. It is said to have been annually acted in the town of Coventry on Hock Thursday, according to ancient custom, till the time of the Reformation, when it was suppressed at the instance of some of the preachers, whose good intention

the townspeople did not deny, though they complained of their severity in this instance, because, said they, "the show was without ill example of manners, papistry, or any superstition." When performed before Elizabeth, the rhymes seem to have been omitted, and the exhibition consisted of hot skirmishes and furious encounters between the English and Danish forces : first, by the lance knights on horseback, armed with spears and shields, many of whom being dismounted, fought also with swords and targets. Then followed two hosts of footmen, one after the other, first marching in ranks ; then, turning about in a warlike manner, they changed their form from ranks into squadrons, then into triangles, then into rings, and then "winding out again they joined in battle. Twice the Danes had the better ; but at the last conflict they were

beaten down, overcome, and many of them led captive for triumph by our English women." Her majesty was much pleased with this performance, and rewarded the actors with two bucks and five marks in money; and with this munificence they were highly satisfied.

## INTERLOCUTORY PLAYS.

WHEN dialogue plays came first into general use, many of them were written by schoolmasters, to be performed by their scholars; and some were composed and played at the universities, by the students of the several colleges: of the latter sort are the curious performances of one Thomas Goff, of Christchurch, Oxford, who, in his day, was esteemed an excellent poet, though his compositions are full of bombast and unnatural images.

These compositions went through two editions, the last of which was printed at London A.D. 1656. As a burlesque upon these and similar performances, in which nature and common sense were outraged, the mock tragedies of "Chrononhotonthologos," and the "Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great," were written ; which still continue to be favourites with the juvenile world.

At this period, not only in comedies, but in the deepest tragedies, a fool, or clown, was deemed absolutely necessary, to divert the audience with his buffoonery. Even Shakespeare himself, in compliance with the false taste of the age in which he lived, has admitted this motley character into the most serious parts of one of his best tragedies. This propensity to laugh, at the expense of good sense and propriety, is well ridiculed by Ben Jonson

in the *Intermeane*, at the end of the first act of the “Staple of News;” and again in the *Preludium* to the “Careless Shepherdess.”

Before the Restoration, the stage decorations and ornaments were very few, and even those extremely plain and homely. An old tapestry served for the scenery, the stage was strewn with rushes, and the dresses were of correspondent meanness. The actors made their entries and exits through the curtains or tapestry which constituted the back scene, and which were divided into three or four compartments by the interposition of the pillars which supported the beam on which the curtains hung. No passages were made on the sides of the stage, till the introduction of the flat front scene, and then the side entrances took place. By degrees, as the players were more encouraged, the houses were



more ornamented, and the scenes, with the decorations, were augmented, till they arrived at the splendour and magnificence of the present age.

The actors themselves made but slow improvement till the reign of Elizabeth; about which time, many of the nobility had servants and retainers, who were players, and went about getting their livelihood by their profession. Out of these companies twelve of the best men were selected, and, at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, were sworn the queen's servants, and were allowed wages and liveries, as grooms of the chamber. From this time, players of celebrity obtained favour and reputation with the public.

Prior to the Restoration, no women appeared on the stage, except at the court masques and similar entertainments, where the chief

ladies of the realm made no scruple of acting such parts as suited their fancies. On the public stage, the female characters were performed by men. Some time after the æra above mentioned, Sir William Davenant set aside the plain front curtains, already alluded to, and caused painted scenes to be substituted in their stead; and, by way of completing the theatrical improvements, he introduced women upon the stage, to sustain their proper characters.

One reason why the ornaments of the stage were formerly so plain and few was, the low price of admission into the theatres. In the prologue to the “Woman Hater,” by Beaumont and Fletcher, mention is made of the *twopenny gallery*. The playhouse called the *Hope*, had seats at five several prices, from sixpence to half-a-crown; and the admission

to other theatres was equally easy. The price to the pit was constantly one shilling.

It was common for the audience, while they sat at the play, to drink wine, or beer, as well as smoke tobacco : a fashion which was continued till the latter end of the reign of Charles I.

The practice of performing common plays, games, or interludes, in churches and chapels, was abolished in the reign of Henry VIII. A.D. 1542 ; but the acting of plays on the sabbath day continued till the reign of Charles I. and then they were performed by the choristers, or singing boys, of St. Paul's Cathedral and the Chapel Royal. The usual time of acting was early in the afternoon. In the reign of Charles I. they usually began at three ; so that the whole play might be performed by day-light.

## MAY GAMES.

THE first of May was consecrated by the heathens, and kept in honour of the goddess Flora. The Romans, on this day, used to go out and fetch laurel, green boughs, branches of trees, and flowers, with singing and rejoicing, and with them they adorned their houses. This custom, continued by the Christians, was condemned by the council of Toledo, on account of its origin; yet it has been constantly kept up in England. "On the kalend, or first of May," says Bourne, "commonly called May-day, the juvenile part of both sexes are wont to rise a little after midnight, and walk to some neighbouring wood, accompanied with music and blowing of

horns, where they break down branches of trees, and adorn them with nosegays and crowns of flowers: when this is done, they return with their booty homewards, about the rising of the sun, and make their doors and windows to triumph with their flowery spoils; and the after-part of the day is chiefly spent in dancing round a tall pole, called a *May-pole*, which, being placed in a convenient part of the village, stands there, as it were consecrated to the goddess of flowers, without the least violation being offered to it in the whole circle of the year." These games are now confined to country towns and villages; but, formerly, London itself was not without them. "In the month of May," says Stow, "the citizens of London, of all estates, generally in every parish, and in some instances, two or three parishes joining together, had their se-

veral *Mayings*, and fetched their Maypoles, with divers warlike shows, with good archers, morrice-dancers, and other devices for pastime, all day long; and towards evening they had stage-plays and bonfires in the streets. These great *Mayings* and *Maygames* were made by the governors and masters of the city, together with the triumphant setting up of the great *shaft*, or principal Maypole, in Leadenhall-street, before the parish church of St. Andrew."

It seems to have been the constant custom, at the celebration of the Maygames, to elect a Lord and Lady, or King and Queen, of the May, who probably presided over the sports." The Lord of the May, and without doubt his Lady also, was decorated with scarfs, ribands, and other fineries.

At the commencement of the sixteenth cen-

tury, or perhaps still earlier, the ancient stories of Robin Hood and his frolicsome companions, seem to have been new modelled, and divided into separate ballads, which much increased their popularity ; for this reason it was customary to personify this famous outlaw, with several of his most noted associates, and add them to the pageantry of the Maygames. He presided as Lord of the May ; and a female, or a youth in a female habit, in the character of his faithful mistress, the Maid Marian, was Lady of the May. His companions were also equipped in appropriate dresses, and distinguished by the title of Robin Hood's Men.

Henry VIII. when young, delighted much in pageantry ; and the early part of his reign abounded in gaudy shows, some of his own devising, others contrived for his amusement.

Among the latter may be reckoned a May game at Shooter's Hill, exhibited by the officers of his guards, about two hundred in number, clothed in green, and headed by their captain, who personated Robin Hood. They met the king, on May-day morning, in the seventh year of his reign, as he was riding out on a maying, from Greenwich to the high ground of Shooter's hill, accompanied by the queen and a large retinue of nobility, of both sexes. The fictitious foresters arrested the progress of the royal party, and their chieftain required of the king that he should stay and see his men shoot. The king gave his assent; and, on a whistle from Robin Hood, all the two hundred archers shot off at once. This was repeated, on a second whistle from the captain; and, by a contrivance in the heads of the arrows, they made a loud and strange



noise, which greatly delighted the king and his party. Robin Hood then approached his majesty, and invited him to see the manner in which he and his companions lived : the royal party accordingly suffered themselves to be conducted into the wood under the hill, where, in arbours made with boughs and decked with flowers, they were served with venison and wine, the archers in the mean time blowing their horns. After the entertainment, with which the king and queen were much pleased, the royal party returned towards Greenwich, and were met on their way by two ladies, riding in a rich open chariot, drawn by five horses, each horse having his name upon his head, and upon every horse sat a lady with her name written. The two ladies in the chariot were splendidly attired, one of them personifying the Lady May, the other the Lady

Flora ; and “ they saluted the king with divers goodly songs, and so brought him to Greenwich.”

May-day is still observed, in different parts of the kingdom, with somewhat of mirth and jollity, but nothing like what took place in the days of our forefathers. The Maypole is kept up in many country villages, and, after it has been dressed with ribands and garlands, a dance takes place among the youths and girls of the place. In some parts of Somerset and Gloucestershire, children deck themselves with chaplets of cowslips and wild hyacinths, and in this manner go about begging half-pence for the purchase of toys and gingerbread. In Dorsetshire, the boys, at an early hour of the morning, come forth, some with garlands composed of three hoops, of different sizes, bound round with flowers, and fastened

longitudinally upon a stick, in the manner of the ancient Bacchanalian *thyrsi*; while others blow their horns, or tin trumpets, with all their might, shouting at intervals *Arour!* *Arour!* probably, a corruption of *Aurora!* *Aurora!* or, rather, of *Aruer*, an ancient title of the sun.

In the metropolis, the observance of May-day is confined to the lowest orders. In the reign of Queen Anne, and probably before her time, the milkmaids decorated their pails with flowers and ribands, with the addition of borrowed plate, silver cups, tankards, and salvers, and carried them upon their heads to the houses of their customers, where they danced, in order to obtain a small gratuity. In later times, the plate, with the other decorations, were placed on a pyramidal frame, and carried by two chairmen upon a wooden horse. The

maidens, with their musician, walked before it, and performed their dance without any incumbrance. This was called the Milkmaid's Garland, but it has not been abroad for some years.

In imitation of the foregoing, a set of people, well known to parish officers by the title of *Bunters*, have a garland, consisting of an inverted basket, covered with flowers and brass culinary utensils. With this they parade the streets, and dance to the sound of rough music, frequently accompanied with a *Jack-in-the-Green*. The latter piece of pageantry consists of a hollow frame of wicker work, in the form of a sugarloaf, but open at the bottom, and sufficiently large and high to receive a man. The frame is covered with green boughs and bunches of flowers interwoven with each other, so that the man within may be completely concealed; and, as he dances with his com-

## 172 CHIMNEYSWEEPERS' FESTIVAL.

panions, the populace are mightily diverted to see the green pyramid jig about.

The chimney sweepers of London have also singled out the first of May for their festival, at which time they parade the streets in companies, disguised in various manners. Their dresses are usually decorated with gilt paper and other mock fineries ; they have their shovels and brushes in their hands, which they rattle together ; and to this rough music they jump about, in imitation of dancing, while a boy in girl's clothing holds out a brass ladle to receive the contributions of the bystanders. Some of the larger companies have a fiddle or drum with them, and a Jack-in-the-Green, as well as a Lord and Lady of the May, who, with smutted faces, follow the minstrel with great affectation of stateliness, and dance as occasion requires.



*Vigil of St. John*

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## LADY OF THE LAMB.

THE Whitsuntide holidays were celebrated by various pastimes, commonly practised upon other festivals ; but on the Monday after the Whitsun-week, at Kidlington, in Oxfordshire, a fat lamb was provided, and the maidens of the town, having their thumbs tied behind them, were permitted to run after it, and she who with her mouth took hold of the lamb, was declared the *Lady of the Lamb*, which, being killed and cleaned, but with the skin hanging on it, was carried on a long pole before the lady and her companions to the Green, attended with music, a morrice-dance of men, and another of women. The rest of the day was spent in mirth and merry glee. On the following day, the lamb, partly baked,



partly boiled, and partly roasted, was served up for the Lady's feast, at which she presided, the music playing during the repast, which closed the solemnity.

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## MIDSUMMER FESTIVITIES.

ON the vigil of St. John the Baptist, commonly called *Midsummer Eve*, it was usual, in most country places, and also in towns and cities, for the inhabitants, both old and young, and of both sexes, to meet together, and make merry, by the side of a large bonfire in the middle of the street, or in some other open and convenient place. Over this fire, the youths frequently leaped; and they also exercised themselves with various sports and pastimes, more especially with running, wrestling, and

dancing. These diversions they continued till midnight, and sometimes till cock-crowing. In London, in addition to the bonfires, on the eve of this saint, as well as upon that of St. Peter and St. Paul, every man's door was shaded with green birch, long fennel, St. John's wort, orpine, white lilies, &c. and ornamented with garlands of beautiful flowers. The citizens also had lamps of glass with oil burning in them all night; and some of them hung out branches of iron, curiously wrought, containing hundreds of lamps lighted at once, which made a very splendid appearance.

The reasons given for making bonfires on St. John's eve, are various, among which are the following: "they made large fires, which might be seen at a great distance, upon the vigil of this saint, in token that he was said, in holy writ, to be a *shining light*." Also, these

fires were made to drive away the dragons and evil spirits, which hovered in the air. In some countries, *bones* were used for fuel, whence they were called *bone-fires*, (by contraction, *bonfires*,) “because the *dragons hated nothing more than the stench of brenyng* (burning) *bones.*”

## MIDSUMMER WATCH.

It was customary in London, and other large cities, to set *the Midsummer Watch* on the eve of St. John the Baptist, with a considerable display of pomp and pageantry. Stow, from whom the following account is taken, says, this institution had been appointed “time out of mind.” The *standing watches* (watchmen who stood at particular stations) in every ward and street of the city and suburbs, were habited in “bright *harness*”

(armour); and there was also a *marching watch* that paraded through all the principal streets. To furnish the latter watch with lights, seven hundred *cressets* (large lanterns, fixed at the end of long poles, and carried upon men's shoulders,) were provided, at the expense of two shillings and sixpence for each cresset. Every cresset required two men, one to bear it, the other to carry a bag with the materials to serve it. Every one of these was paid for his trouble; and he had also given him, that evening, a straw hat and a painted badge, besides the donation of his breakfast on the following morning. The marching watch consisted of two thousand men, most of them being old soldiers, of every denomination. They appeared in appropriate habits, with arms in their hands; and many of them, especially the musicians and standard-bearers, rode

upon large horses. There were also divers pageants, and morrice-dancers with the constables, one half of which, to the amount of one hundred and twenty, went out on the eve of St. John, and the other half on the eve of St. Peter. The constables were dressed in "bright harness, some over gilt, and every one had a jorjet of scarlet thereon, and a chain of gold, his henchman following him, his minstrels before him, and his cresset light at his side. The mayor himself came after them, well mounted, with his sword-bearer before him, in fair armour, on horseback, preceded by the waits, or city minstrels, and the mayor's officers in liveries of worsted or say jackets, party-coloured. The mayor was surrounded by his footmen and torch-bearers, and followed by two henchmen on large horses. The sheriffs' watches came, one after the other, in like

order, but not so numerous ; for the mayor had, besides his *giants*, three pageants ; whereas the sheriffs had only two, besides their giants, each with their morrice-dance, and one henchman ; their officers were clothed in jackets of worsted, or say, party-coloured, but differing from those belonging to the mayor and from each other : they had also a great number of harnessed (armed) men." This pageant was continued till the 31st year of Henry VIII. A.D. 1539, when it was discontinued on account of the expense. It was revived in the second year of Edward VI. A.D. 1548, but soon afterwards was totally laid aside.

At Chester, the annual show at setting the Midsummer watch was continued to a much later period. The pageant used on this occasion is said to have consisted of " four giants,

one unicorn, one dromedary, one luce, one camel, one ass, one dragon, six hobby-horses, and sixteen naked boys," all manufactured with hoops, boards, pasteboard, paper, buckram, size-cloth, old linen, &c. and bedizened with tinsel, tin foil, gold and silver leaf, and colours of various kinds. In the time of the Commonwealth, this spectacle was discontinued, and the giants, with the beasts, were destroyed. But at the restoration of Charles II. the citizens agreed to restore the pageant.

At Burford, in Oxfordshire, it was customary, on Midsummer Eve, to carry a dragon about the town, with mirth and rejoicing, to which was also added the picture, or image, of a giant. This pageant is said to have been established in memory of a great victory obtained near that place about A.D. 750, by

Cuthred, king of the West Saxons, over Ethelbald, king of Mercia, who lost his standard, surmounted by a golden dragon, in the action.

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## ST. CLEMENT AND ST. CATHERINE.

THE anniversary of St. Clement, and that of St. Catherine, were also solemnized by religious processions; which were disused after the Reformation, but again established by Queen Mary. In the year that she ascended the throne, on the eve of St. Catherine, this saint's procession was celebrated at London, with five hundred great lights, which were carried round St. Paul's steeple; and, three years afterwards, her image was taken about the battlements of the same church, "with



fine singing and many great lights." But the most splendid show of this kind in Mary's time, was the procession on St. Clement's day, exhibited in the streets of London; it consisted of "sixty priests and clerks, in their copes, attended by divers of the inns of court, who went next the priests, preceded by eighty banners and streamers, with the waits, or minstrels of the city, playing upon different instruments."

The sports exhibited on these occasions did not terminate with the pageants and processions; for the evening was generally concluded with festivities and diversions of various kinds.

## HOCK TIDE.

HOKE-DAY, or *Hock-day*, was a popular holiday in ancient times. It was usually kept on the Tuesday following the second Sunday after Easter, though in many places two days, namely, the Monday and Tuesday, were appropriated to this pastime, in which the townspeople, divided into parties, were accustomed to drag each other about with ropes, or rather the men and women bound each other; “especially the women the men;” whence it was also called *Binding Tuesday*. In several manors in Hampshire, it was “customary for the men to hock (bind) the women on the Monday, and the women the men upon the Tuesday; that is, on that day the women, in merriment, stop the ways with ropes, and pull the passen-

gers to them, desiring something to be laid out in pious uses, in order to obtain their freedom." The origin of this custom is, by some, derived from the massacre of the Danes, in the reign of Ethelred ; and by others from the rejoicings made by the English on the death of Hardicanute, which delivered them from the intolerable government of the Danes. Some vestiges of this custom are yet to be met with in the West of England. In some parts of Wiltshire, the men, on Hock Monday, seize a woman, and binding her in a chair, carry her about the town ; and on the following day, the women retaliate, by binding and chairing a man. This sport is carried on with so much rigour, or rather barbarity, by both sexes, that on their respective days for suffering, neither man nor woman will venture abroad, unless compelled by absolute necessity.

SHEEP SHEARING,  
AND HARVEST HOME.

Two feasts are annually made by the farmers of England, one in the spring, the other at the end of the summer, or beginning of autumn; but they are not confined to any particular day. The first is the *Sheep-shearing*, the second the *Harvest-home*. Both were celebrated in ancient times with feasting and variety of rustic pastimes: at present, excepting a dinner, or, more frequently, a supper, at the conclusion of the sheep-shearing, and the harvest, little or nothing remains of the former customs.

The particular manner in which the sheep-shearing was celebrated in old times, is not

recorded; but respecting the harvest-home several curious remains are extant. A foreign gentleman, who was in England at the close of the sixteenth century, and wrote an account of what he saw here, says, "As we were returning to our inn, (in or near Windsor,) we happened to meet some country people celebrating their *harvest home*: their last load of corn they crown with flowers, having besides an image richly dressed, by which, perhaps, they signify *Ceres*: this they keep moving about, while the men and women, and men and maid servants, riding through the streets in the cart, shout as loud as they can, till they arrive at the barn." Another foreign writer says, he saw in England "the country people bring home a *figure* made with corn, round which the men and the women were promiscuously singing, and preceded by a piper and

a drum." This practice of placing a *corn image* upon the last cart that leaves the field, and shouting loudly as they return, is still in practice in Dorsetshire. "In the north," says Brand, "not half a century ago, they used every where to dress up a figure something similar to that just described, at the end of the harvest, which they called a *kern baby*," plainly a corruption of *corn baby*.

The harvest supper is in some places called a *mell supper*, and a *churn supper*. The former from the old French *mesler*, to mingle together, because on this occasion the master and servants sit promiscuously at the same table; the latter a corruption of *kern* or *corn*. At these feasts, the servants and master are alike, and every thing is done and said with the utmost freedom. They sit at the same table, converse together without restraint, and

spend the remainder of the day, or night, in dancing and singing, without the least difference or distinction.

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## MOTHERING SUNDAY.

IN many parts of England, especially in the West, the fourth Sunday in Lent, commonly called *Midlent*, is observed as a festival, under the title of *Mothering Sunday*. On this occasion, servants and apprentices visit their parents and friends, and are regaled with wheat furmity, and a plum cake, sugared and ornamented at the top, similar to the twelfth cakes of London. Persons who can afford it, also make a point of having a quarter of lamb for dinner on this day. The practice is derived from the Roman Catholics, who, on Midlent

Sunday, went in procession from the most distant parts of each parish to visit the Mother Church. Among the heathens, *a cake* was offered to Ceres, (called also *Dea Mater*, or the Mother of the Gods,) who was reckoned the patroness of agriculture; to her corn was sacred, and hence the *wheat furmity*. The *lamb* was probably added during the dark ages, when Jewish rites, Christian sacraments, and heathen superstitions, were strangely blended together.

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## SAINTS' FESTIVALS.

IN the north of England, the inhabitants of most country villages observe some Sunday in a more particular manner than the other Sundays of the year, namely, the Sunday after the day of the dedication of their churches. Then



the people deck themselves in their gaudiest clothes, and have open doors, and splendid entertainments for the reception and treating of their relations and friends, who visit them on that occasion from each neighbouring town. The morning is spent, for the most part, at church ; after which the remainder of the day is devoted to eating and drinking : and the day or two succeeding are occupied in a similar manner, the intervals being filled up with rural pastimes and exercises, as dancing on the green, wrestling, cudgelling, and the like. In some parts, indeed, the Sunday's feasting is nearly laid aside, and one day only is observed for the whole, which is called *hop-ping*, either from the dancing and other exercises then practised, or from the festival *hop-ping*, as it were, over the Sunday. On these occasions many quarrels between neighbours

used to be made up ; “ and hither came the wives, in comely manner ; and they which were of the better sort, had their mantles carried with them, as well for show as to keep them from cold at the table. These mantles also did many use at the churches, at the morrow masses, and at other times.”

These feasts gave rise to the *Church Ales*, called also *Easter Ales*, and *Whitsun Ales*, from their being frequently held at those seasons. The churchwardens and other chief parish officers, observing the feasts, or wakes, to be more popular than any other holidays, conceived, that by establishing other institutions, somewhat similar to them, they might attract a large company of people, and annually collect from them such sums of money, for the support and repairs of the church, as would lessen the burthen of the parish rates.

By way of enticement, they brewed a certain portion of strong ale, to be ready on the day appointed for the festival, which they sold to the populace : and most of the better sort, in addition to what they paid for the drink, contributed something towards the collection. No wonder if such institutions should speedily run into licentiousness ; on which account they have long been discontinued.

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## ATHLETIC EXERCISES.

### THROWING.

THE art of *Slinging*, or of casting stones with a sling, is of high antiquity, and was carried to a great degree of perfection among the Asiatic nations. It was well known and practised at a very early period in Europe ; and



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# *Athletic Exercises.*

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our Saxon ancestors appear to have been very expert in the use of this missile kind of warfare. The sling consisted of a thong of leather, one end of which was attached to the middle finger of the right hand, and the other end was held between the forefinger and thumb. When a stone was placed upon the bend of the sling, it was whirled briskly round, till it had acquired a sufficient impetus, and then the slinger suddenly let go his hold of one end of the sling, by which the stone was cast to a considerable distance, and with great force. Sometimes, the sling was attached to a staff, or truncheon, three or four feet in length, and wielded with both hands; it was then used for throwing stones of more than ordinary magnitude. As a weapon of war, the sling has long been out of use; but rustics in the country still amuse themselves with

it, as a sportive exercise, and to shew their dexterity in hitting a mark. Sometimes, instead of the leather thong, or a garter, which is a common substitute for it, they use a stick of ash, or hazel, a yard or more in length, and about an inch in diameter : it is split at the top, so as to make an opening wide enough to receive a stone, which is confined by the reaction of the stick on both sides, but not so strongly as to resist the impulse of the slinger. It requires much practice to handle this instrument with any degree of certainty ; for if, in the act of throwing, the stone quit the stick either sooner or later than it ought, the desired effect is sure to fail. But those, who use it properly, cast stones to a great distance and with much precision.

Throwing of heavy weights and stones with the hand was much practised in former times.

The Greeks amused themselves with casting the *discus*, which was a round flat plate of metal, of considerable size, very heavy, and so bevelled and polished at the edges, as to require great skill in the player to take a firm hold of it. In some respects, it resembled the modern *quoit*; “but with this difference,” says Dr. Johnson, “the game of quoits is a game of skill; the discus was only a trial of strength, as among us to throw the hammer.”

Among the amusements practised in the twelfth century by the young Londoners, was the casting of stones, darts, and other missile weapons. Bars of wood and iron were afterwards used for the same purpose; and the attention of the populace was so much engaged in this kind of exercise, that they neglected in a great measure the practice of archery; this occasioned an edict to be passed,



in the 39th year of Edward III. (A.D. 1345) prohibiting the pastimes of “ throwing stones, wood, and iron,” and recommending the use of the long bow upon all convenient opportunities.

*Casting of the bar* was formerly a part of a hero's education ; and kings and princes were admired for their agility and grace in throwing “ the stone, the bar, or the plummet.” Henry VIII. even after his accession to the throne, retained the casting of the bar among his favourite amusements. The sledge hammer, and, among rustics, an axle-tree, were also used for the same purpose as the bar and the stone.

At the commencement of the seventeenth century, these pastimes had lost their attraction among the higher classes, and were considered as exercises fit only for soldiers in camp, &c.

In the reign of Henry II. the throwing of spears and javelins was much in use, as a holiday sport, among the young Londoners. Though in itself a military exercise, it was frequently practised as a trial of strength and of skill : of the former, when the attempt was to throw beyond a certain boundary, or to exceed a competitor in distance ; and of the latter, when the spear was cast at a quintain, or other determined mark.

## QUOITS.

THE game of *Quoits*, or *Coits* (for it is written both ways), is still in use, and is deemed superior to any of the foregoing pastimes, on account of its depending less on mere strength, and more upon superior skill. The quoit is a circular plate of iron, perforated in the middle, and made larger or smaller, to

suit the convenience or strength of the players. To play at this game, an iron pin, called a *hob*, is driven into the ground; and at the distance of eighteen or twenty yards another similar pin is also fixed. The players stand at one of these pins, and throw an equal number of quoits at the other; the nearest of them to the hob are reckoned towards the game. When they have cast all their quoits, the candidates go over to the point at which they have been throwing, and when they have determined the state of the game, they throw their quoits back again at the hob where they had before stood; and thus continue to act on alternate sides till the game is ended. Rustics in the country, for want of proper quoits, frequently play with horse-shoes; and hence, in many places, the quoit is called *a shoe*.

## RACING.

FOOT-RACING has, in all ages, been an approved exercise, and was long considered as an essential part of a young man's education, especially if he were of rank, and brought up to a military profession. Originally, it had no other incitement than emulation ; but, in process of time, races of this kind were instituted as public amusements, and large or honourable rewards were conferred upon the victor. Two centuries back, running was deemed by no means derogatory to the rank of nobility ; but at present, such is the caprice of public taste, foot-races seldom occur but for the purpose of betting, and the racers are paid for their performance : in many instances, the distance does not exceed a hundred yards. At fairs, wakes, revels, and other occasions, where many people

are assembled together, this species of amusement is sometimes promoted, but most frequently the contest is confined to the younger part of the concourse.

### PRISONERS' BARS.

THE rustic game of *Prisoners' Bars*, or *Base*, was much practised in former times ; and in the reign of Edward III. was, by proclamation, prohibited to be played in the avenues of the palace of Westminster, during the Session of Parliament, on account of the interruption it occasioned to the members and others passing to and fro, as their business required. The performance of this pastime requires two parties, of equal number, each of which has a *base*, or *home*, at the distance of about twenty or thirty yards from that of the opposing party. The players then, on either side, tak-

ing hold of hands, extend themselves in length as far as they conveniently can, always taking care that one of them may touch the base. When any one of them quits the hand of his fellow, and runs into the field, which is called giving the chase, he is immediately followed by one of his opponents, who again is followed by a second from the former side, and he by a second opponent; and thus alternately, until as many are out as choose to run, every one pursuing the man he first followed, and no other; and if he overtake him sufficiently near to touch him, his party claims one towards the game, and both return home. They then run forth again and again, in like manner, till the number is completed which is to decide the game. In Essex, this game is played with the addition of two prisons, which are denoted by two stakes driven into the ground parallel

with the home boundaries, and about thirty yards from them. Every person touched, on either side, in the chase, is sent to one or other of these prisons, where he must remain till the conclusion of the game, if not previously delivered by one of his associates, and this can only be accomplished by touching him, which is a difficult task, requiring the interference of the most skilful players, because the prison belonging to either party is always much nearer the base of their opponents than to their own; and if the person sent to relieve his confederate be touched by an antagonist before he reaches him, he also becomes a prisoner, and stands in equal need of deliverance. This addition of the prisons occasions a considerable degree of variety in the pastime, and is frequently productive of much pleasantry.

## WRESTLING.

THE art of *Wrestling*, though now chiefly confined to the lowest class of people, was highly esteemed among the ancients, and constituted a considerable feature of the Olympic games. In the ages of chivalry, also, it was accounted an indispensable accomplishment for a hero. In Britain, it was probably in use long before the introduction of foreign manners; and the inhabitants of Cornwall and Devon, who, from time immemorial, have been celebrated for their expertness in this pastime, are reputed to be the best wrestlers in the kingdom.

The citizens of London also, in former times, had the credit of being expert wrestlers; and, annually, on St. James's Day, they were accustomed to make a public trial of their



skill. In the sixth year of Henry III. (A.D. 1219) they held their anniversary for this purpose near the hospital of St. Matilda, at St. Giles's in the Fields, where they were met by the inhabitants of the city and suburbs of Westminster; and a ram was the prize wrestled for. The Londoners were vastly superior, and carried off the prize, which produced a challenge from the conquered party to renew the contest upon the Lammas Day following, at Westminster. The citizens of London readily consented, and met them accordingly; but, in the midst of the diversion, the bailiff of Westminster and his associates took occasion to quarrel with the Londoners, and a battle ensued, in which many of the latter were severely wounded, as they made their retreat to the city.

From the time that wrestling became un-

fashionable, and was rarely practised by persons of opulence, it declined also among the populace, and at present is seldom resorted to, except at wakes and fairs.

Besides the ram, already mentioned as the prize for wrestling, other rewards were sometimes proposed, as a cock, a white bull, a courser with bridle and saddle, a pair of gloves, a gold ring, a pipe of wine, a beaver hat, &c.

Wrestling was performed either by the parties grappling with each other about the shoulders and parts of the body above the girdle ; or, they wore a girdle, by which they laid hold of each other. He who overthrew his opponent so that his back, or one shoulder and the contrary heel, touched the ground, was accounted to give the *fall* ; but if the latter were only endangered and made a nar-

row escape, it was called a *foyle*. The fall-giver was exempted from playing again with him who received it, but was bound to answer his successor.

At the commencement of the fourteenth century, a species of wrestling was much in use, which was performed by two competitors, each mounted on the shoulders of another, and he who could pull his antagonist from his seat was accounted the victor.

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## GAMES WITH THE BALL.

THE *Ball*, which has given rise to many popular pastimes, is of high antiquity. Fitzstephen, who wrote in the thirteenth century, says, the London schoolboys, annually upon Shrove Tuesday, went into the fields, imme-

diately after dinner, and played at “the celebrated game of ball;” but of the nature of this game we are now ignorant.

The game of *Hand-ball*, called by the French *Palm-play*, “because the exercise consisted originally in receiving the ball and driving it back again with the *palm of the hand*,” was formerly a favourite pastime among the youth of both sexes; and in many parts of the kingdom it was customary for them to play at this game during the Easter holidays, for *tansy cakes*. In ancient times, the mayor, aldermen, and sheriff of Newcastle, accompanied by a great number of burgesses, used to go in state, every year, at the feasts of Easter and Whitsuntide, to a little mall of the town, called the *Forth*, to witness this game. And the young people still continue to assemble there at those seasons, and play at hand-

ball, or to dance, but are no longer countenanced by the presence of the magistracy.

Originally, this game was played with the naked hand ; then with a glove, which, in some instances, was lined ; afterwards, cords and tendons (catgut) were bound upon the hand, to make the ball rebound more forcibly ; and hence the *racket* derived its origin. The places where this game was played were called *tennis-courts*, and the game itself obtained the name of *tennis*, from the French term *tenez*, “ take it—hold it,” or, “ there it goes,” frequently used during the exercise. These courts were set out in different compartments, each of which had its particular name, and gave certain advantages to the player who struck the ball into it.

The game of *Fives*, so called from its having five competitors on each side, is but a modi-

fication of the ancient sport of hand-ball, or tennis, and is still much in use. The ball is sometimes struck with the hand, and sometimes the racket is used.

The *Balloon*, or *Wind-ball*, was a large ball, made of double leather, filled with wind, and driven to and fro with the hands ; for which purpose each of the players had a round hollow bracer of wood, to cover the hand and lower part of the arm, with which he struck the ball. The sport consisted in the players driving the ball from one to another, without suffering it to fall to the ground. This pastime, in which both sexes engaged, was usually practised in the open fields, and is much commended for the healthiness of the exercise it afforded.

*Stool-ball* is frequently mentioned by writers of the three last centuries, but without any

proper definition of the game. In the North of England, a pastime, thus denominated, is still in use, and consists in setting a stool upon the ground, before which one of the players takes his station, and beats off with his hand a ball tossed at it by his antagonist. Every time he strikes away the ball, he counts one towards the game; but if he miss, and the ball touch the stool, the players change places : which also is the case if the one who throws the ball can catch it in his hands before it has touched the ground, when it has been beaten back by the other. This game seems to be analogous to cricket, except that the hand is used instead of a bat, and a stool is substituted for a wicket. In other parts of the country, a certain number of stools are set up in a circular form, at a distance from each other, and every one of them is occupied by a

single player. When the ball is struck, which, as before, is with the hand, the players all run in succession from stool to stool; and if he who threw the ball can regain it in time to strike any one of the players before he reaches the stool to which he is running, he takes his place, and the person touched must throw the ball, till, by a similar proceeding, he can recover his place in the circle. Stool-ball seems to have been a game more appropriated to females than to males; but occasionally it was played by both sexes indiscriminately.

*Hurling*, an ancient exercise, but still much in use in the West of England, seems originally to have been a species of hand-ball. Two methods of hurling were in use in Cornwall at the commencement of the seventeenth century. In the east of that county, the ball was *hurled to certain goals*; in the west, it was



*hurled to the country.* In the former method, there are fifteen, twenty, or thirty players, on each side, who, stripped almost naked, join hands in ranks, one against another; out of these ranks, they match themselves by pairs, and every couple are to watch each other's motions during the game. Two bushes are then stuck up, about eight or ten feet asunder; and directly opposite to them, ten or twelve score paces off, two others are pitched: these are the goals, from one of which a ball is thrown up, and whoever can catch it, and carry it to the goal of his adversary, wins the game. This, however, is not easily done; for he is beset by his mate, who endeavours to drive him back, and obliges him to defend himself, by thrusting him in the breast with his clenched fist, which is called *butting*. By the laws of the game, "they must *hurl* man to man,

and not two set upon one man at once. The hurler against the ball must not *butt* nor *hand-fast* under the girdle ; he who hath the ball must *butt* only in the other's breast, and deal no fore-ball ; that is, he may not throw it to any of his mates standing nearer to the goal than himself."

In *hurling to the country*, two, three, or more parishes agree to hurl against an equal number of other parishes. The matches are usually made by gentlemen ; and their goals are either their own houses, or some towns or villages, three or four miles asunder. When they meet, they neither compare numbers, nor match themselves in pairs ; but a silver ball is thrown up, and that company which can catch and carry it, by force or sleight, to the place assigned, gains both ball and victory. Those who see which way the ball is carried, give

notice, by calling out *Ware East!* or *Ware West!* according to the direction in which it passes. The hurlers take their nearest way, over hills, dales, hedges, ditches, mires, and even rivers; and sometimes twenty or thirty are to be seen in the slough, or water, tugging together, and scrambling for the prize.

The Irish, when playing at hurling to the goals, use a kind of bat, flat on both sides, and broad and curving at the lower end. With this instrument those who are skilful in the pastime know how to catch up the ball, and often run with it a considerable distance, tossing it occasionally from the bat, and recovering it again, till they find a proper opportunity of driving it back among their companions, who generally follow, and are ready to receive it.

*Foot-ball*, a pastime which of late years has

fallen into disrepute, though formerly much in vogue among the commoners of England, is so called because the ball is driven with the foot, in preference to the hand. When a match at foot-ball is made, two parties, equal in numbers, take the field, and stand between two goals: the latter are placed at the distance of eighty or a hundred yards from each other. The ball, which is commonly a blown bladder, cased with leather, is delivered in the midst of the ground, and the object of either party is to drive it through the goal of their opponents, by which the game is won. The abilities of the performers are best displayed in attacking and defending the goals, whence the pastime is more frequently called *a goal at foot-ball* than a *game at foot-ball*. In this attack and defence, the exercise becomes exceedingly violent; the players kick each other's shins with-

out the least ceremony, and some are overthrown, at the hazard of their limbs. The rustic boys made use of an inflated bladder, without the leather covering, by way of foot-ball; and they put peas or horsebeans within, to occasion a rattling as it was kicked about. It was a very ancient custom in Chester for the shoemakers, yearly, on Shrove Tuesday, to deliver to the drapers, in the presence of the mayor, a foot-ball of leather, of the value of three shillings and fourpence, or upwards, to play at, from the cross on the open place called Rode-hee, to the Common Hall of the city. But as this practice was frequently productive of serious mischief, in the year 1540, the ball was exchanged for six glayves of silver, of equal value with the ball, as a reward for the best runner on that day upon the Rode-hee.

Of the numerous games with the ball, which require the assistance of a club, or bat, the most ancient seems to be that which is now distinguished by the name of *Goff*. In the northern parts of the kingdom, it is much practised. In the reign of Edward III. the Latin name *cambuca*, “a crooked club, or staff,” was applied to this pastime, because it was played with such an instrument. The bat was also styled a *bandy*, from its being bent; and hence the game itself is frequently written in English *bandy-ball*.

*Goff*, according to the present modification of the game, is performed with a bat, not much unlike the *bandy*. The handle of this instrument is straight, about four feet and a half in length, with a curvature at the bottom faced with horn, and lined with lead. The ball, which is small, but extremely hard, is made of

leather, and stuffed with feathers, or sometimes, though rarely, with cotton. The game consists in driving the ball into certain holes, made in the ground ; and he who achieves his task the soonest, or with the fewest strokes, is the victor. The goff-lengths, or spaces between the first and last holes, are sometimes extended to the distance of two or three miles. The number of intervening holes appears to be optional ; but the ball must be struck into the holes, and not beyond them.

A pastime, called *Stow-ball*, is frequently mentioned by writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and seems to have differed little, if at all, from goff.

The game of *Pall-Mall*, which some have considered as a species of goff, consisted, according to Cotgrave, in driving a round box ball with a mallet through a high arch of

iron; and he who could do this with the fewest blows won the game. This pastime was very fashionable in the time of Charles II. and the walk in St. James's Park, now called *The Mall*, received its name from having been appropriated to the use of it. The denomination *Mall*, given to the game, is derived from the *mallet*, or wooden hammer, with which the players struck the ball.

In the north of England, a game, very analogous to that of Pall-Mall, is played in a ground, or alley, appropriated to the purpose, and the ball is to be driven from one end of it to the other, by means of a mallet, the handle of which is about three feet three or four inches in length. Thus far it resembles Pall-Mall; but it has the addition of a ring, which is placed equidistant from the sides of the alley, but much nearer the bottom than the top of



the ground ; and through this ring it is requisite that the ball be passed in its progress. The ring is made to turn easily upon a swivel, and the two flat sides are distinguished from each other. If the ball pass through the one, it is said to be *lawful*, and the player goes on ; but if through the other, it is declared *unlawful*, and he is obliged to beat back the ball, and drive it through again, till it passes on the lawful side. He then proceeds to the bottom of the ground, where is an iron arch, through which it is also necessary for the ball to be passed, and then the game is finished. The victory is decided by the number of blows given to the ball ; and he who executes his task with the least number gains it.

The game of *Club-ball* seems to have differed from that of goff, chiefly in being played with a straight bat instead of a curved one.

From this game of club-ball, that of *Cricket* seems to owe its origin. The latter, which has of late years become a very fashionable as well as healthy pastime, is played with the straight bat and a ball, with single or double wickets. Single wickets require five players on each side, and the double wickets eleven; though the number in both instances may be varied, at the pleasure of the two parties. The wicket formerly consisted of two straight thin sticks, called *stumps*, two-and-twenty inches in height, which were fixed perpendicularly in the ground, six inches apart, and over the top of both was laid a small round piece of wood, called the *bail*, so as to fall off readily, if either of the stumps were touched by the ball. Of late years, the wicket consists of three stumps, and two bails; the middle stump being added, to prevent the ball from passing

through the wicket without throwing down the bail. The external stumps are now seven inches apart, and all of them three feet two inches in height. At single wicket, the striker with his bat is the protector of the wicket ; the opposing party stand in the field, to catch or stop the ball, and the bowler, who is one of them, takes his place by the side of a small stump, set up for that purpose, at the distance of two-and-twenty yards from the wicket, from which station he bowls the ball at the wicket, with the intention of beating it down. If he prove successful in his aim, the batsman retires from the play, and another of his party succeeds ; but if, on the contrary, the ball is struck by the bat, and driven into the field, beyond the reach of those who stand out to stop it, the striker runs to the stump at the bowler's station, touches it with his bat, and

then returns to his wicket. If this be performed before the ball is thrown back, it is called *a run*, and one notch, or score, is made upon the tally towards the game.

At double wicket, a second wicket is set up instead of the bowler's stump, and two batsmen, one at each wicket, go in at the same time. There are also two bowlers, who usually bowl four balls in succession alternately. When the ball is struck, the two batsmen run to each other's wicket, and exchange places.

*Trap Ball*, so called from the *trap* used to elevate the ball, in order to afford the batsman a fair blow at it, is of more ancient date than cricket, and perhaps coeval with most of the early games played with the bat and ball. The trap is generally made in the form of a shoe, the heel part being hollowed out for the

reception of the ball, with the end of a small lever under it. But boys and rustics, who cannot readily procure a trap, content themselves with making a round hole in the ground, and, by way of lever, use a beef brisket bone, or a flat piece of wood, of similar size and shape, which is placed in a slanting position, one half in the hole, with the ball upon it, and the other half projecting out: the elevated end being struck smartly with the bat, occasions the ball to rise to a considerable height, and all the purposes of a trap are thus answered. The game is not restricted to any particular number of players, but it seldom exceeds six or eight on a side.

In Essex, the game of trap-ball is played very differently from what it is in the vicinity of the metropolis, and requires much more dexterity in its performance. Instead of the

broad flat bat, commonly used, a round cudgel is substituted, about an inch and a half in diameter, and three feet in length; and those who have acquired a habit of striking the ball with this instrument rarely miss their blow, but frequently drive it to an astonishing distance.

*Northern Spell* is played with a trap, and the ball is struck with a bat, or, more commonly, with a bludgeon. The performance of this game does not require the attendance of either of the parties in the field to catch or stop the ball, the contest being simply who shall strike it to the greatest distance in a given number of strokes.

*Tip-cat*, or the game of *Cat*, is a rustic pastime, well known in many parts of the kingdom. It derives its denomination from a piece of wood, called a *cat*, with which it is played.

The cat is about six inches in length, and an inch and a half, or two inches, in diameter, and diminished from the middle towards each end, in the shape of a double cone. By this contrivance, the places of the trap and ball are at once supplied; for when the cat is laid upon the ground, the player, with his cudgel, strikes it smartly on one of its ends, which makes it rise, with a rotatory motion, high enough for him to beat it away, as he would a ball from a trap.

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## MINSTRELSY.

THE Britons were passionately fond of vocal and instrumental music; for this reason, the *Bards*, who exhibited in one person the musician and the poet, were held in the highest

estimation among them. Their songs and their music are said to have been so extremely affecting, that sometimes, when two armies were standing in order of battle, on the point of engaging in a most furious conflict, the poets would step in between them, and by their soft fascinating songs, calm the fury of the warriors, and prevent bloodshed.

The *Scalds*, the ancient poets and musicians of the Northern nations, resembled the bards of the Britons, and were held in equal veneration by their countrymen. When the Saxons established themselves in Britain, these poetical musicians were their chief favourites. The courts of the kings, and the residences of the opulent, afforded them a constant asylum. In the Anglo-Saxon language, they were distinguished by two appellations; the one equivalent to the modern term *Gleemen*, or merry-



makers, and the other *Harpers*, derived from the harp, the instrument on which they usually played. The gleemen added mimicry, and other means of promoting mirth, to their profession, as well as dancing and tumbling, with sleights-of-hand, and variety of deceptions, to amuse the spectators.

One part of the gleemen's profession was teaching animals to dance, to tumble, and put themselves into a variety of attitudes.

The Bards and Scalds used the harp to accompany their songs and modulate their voices: the Saxon *Gleemen* and *Joculators* followed their example, and are frequently called *Harpers* for that reason; but it has been ascertained that they were acquainted with several other instruments of music, as, the violin, or something very similar to it;



*Saxon Gleemen.*



pipes, or flutes, of various kinds ; horns and trumpets ; and the tabor, or drum.

Soon after the Norman Conquest, these musicians lost the Saxon appellation of Glee-men, and were called *Minstrels*, a term well known in Normandy some time before. As the minstrel's art consisted of several branches, the professors were distinguished by different denominations, as *Rhymers*, *Singers*, *Story-tellers*, *Joculators*, or *Jugglers*, *Jestours*, or *Relators of Heroic Actions*, *Buffoons*, and *Poets*. Some, as the Story-tellers and Poets, composed themselves the subjects they sang or related ; others, as the Singers and Jestours, used the compositions of others. The Poets embellished their compositions with rhymes ; but the Story-tellers related their histories in prose. The Jugglers, who in the

middle ages were famous for playing upon the viol (an instrument much resembling the modern hurdy-gurdy), accompanied the songs of the poets, who were also assisted by the singers; and this union of talents rendered the performances more harmonious and more pleasing to the auditory, while it increased their reward, so that they found it to their interest to travel in large parties.

The king's minstrel was an officer of rank in the courts of the Norman monarchs. He had the privilege of accompanying his master when he journeyed, and of being near his person; and, probably, was the regulator of the royal sports, and had the appointment of the other minstrels belonging to the royal household: hence he had the title of *King*, or chief of the minstrels. This title of royalty was not confined to the king's minstrel; it was also

bestowed upon the chief of other companies of musicians ; and hence the subsequent titles of *King of the Fiddlers*, *King of the Revels*, &c. the term *king* being taken for *chief*.

In the middle ages, the courts of princes, and the residences of the opulent were crowded with minstrels ; and such large sums of money were expended for their maintenance, that the public treasuries were often drained. The monks, who begrudged every thing that went beside them, took offence at this, and not only expressed their indignation in terms of scurrilous abuse, but also severely censured the nobility for patronizing and rewarding such a shameless set of sordid flatterers, and the populace for frequenting their exhibitions. On the other hand, the minstrels appear to have given ample occasion for censure ; and contributed more to their own downfall, by their im-

morality and insolence, than all the defamatory declamations of their ecclesiastical opponents.

The extensive privileges enjoyed by the minstrels, and the long continuance of public favour, inflated their pride, and made them insolent; they even went so far as to claim their reward by a prescriptive right, and settled its amount according to the estimate they formed of their own abilities, and the opulence of the noblemen into whose houses they thought proper to intrude. The large gratuities, collected by these artists, not only occasioned great numbers to join their fraternity, but also induced many idle and dissipated persons to assume the character of minstrels, to the disgrace of the profession. These evils, at length, became so notorious, that, in the reign of Edward II. it was thought necessary to restrain them by a public edict.

In the reign of Elizabeth, the minstrels had lost the protection of the opulent; and their credit was sunk so low in the public estimation, that, in an act against vagrants, they were included among the "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars," and subjected to similar punishments with them. This edict seems to have given the death-blow to the profession of minstrels. The name, however, remained, and was applied to itinerant fiddlers, and other musicians, as well as to ballad singers, who now constitute the only vestige of this once numerous fraternity.



## ITINERANT PERFORMERS.

THE *Joculator*, or the *Jougleur* of the Normans, was frequently included under the collective appellation of *minstrel*. His profession was originally very comprehensive, and included the practice of all the arts attributed to the minstrel; and some of the joculators were excellent tumblers. In the fourteenth century, he was also denominated a *tregetour*, or *tragetour*; at which time he appears to have been separated from the musical poets, who are more generally considered as minstrels.

The name of *tragetours* was chiefly appropriated to those artists, who, by sleight-of-hand, with the assistance of machinery of various kinds, deceived the eyes of the spec-

tators, and produced such illusions as were usually supposed to be the effect of enchantment; for which reason, they were frequently ranked with magicians, sorcerers, and witches.

These artists, who were greatly encouraged in the middle ages, travelled in large companies, carrying with them such machinery as was necessary for the performance of their deceptions.

The proper profession of the juggler consisted of astrology, or fortune-telling, and sleight-of-hand performances; to which were added pantomimical exhibitions, vaulting, tumbling, jumping through a hoop, balancing, grotesque dances by the clown, and dancing upon the tight rope. The vaulting, tumbling, and balancing, were not generally executed by the chief of the company, but by some of his confederates; and very often this part of the

show was performed by females, who were called *glee maidens* by the Saxons, and *tumbling women* and *balancing women*, in more modern language.

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## FEATS OF AGILITY.

THE exhibition of dancing, connected with leaping and tumbling, for the entertainment of princes and noblemen, on occasions of festivity, is of high antiquity : the astonishment, or admiration, excited by the difficulty of such performances, excused their absurdity, and rendered them agreeable to persons of rank and affluence. The Saxon princes encouraged the dancers and tumblers ; and the courts of the Norman monarchs were crowded with them : and, notwithstanding the opposition of the clergy, they were not only well received,

but even retained in the houses of the opulent, to promote merriment ; in doing which, they frequently descended to the lowest kind of buffoonery.

Among the pastimes exhibited for the amusement of Queen Elizabeth, at Kenilworth Castle, an Italian was introduced, who exhibited surprising feats of agility ; insomuch that Laneham, who wrote the account, declares he began to doubt whether he were “ a man or a spirit,” and that he could not tell “ what to make of him, save that he might guess his back to be metalled like a lamprey, that has no bone, but a line like a lute-string.”

#### THE SWORD DANCE.

AMONG the dances performed by the jocular and his company, the Sword Dance appears to have been a favourite. This dance

was in great repute with the Anglo-Saxons, who derived it from their ancestors, the ancient Germans. This dance continues to be practised in the North of England, about Christmas time, and also constitutes a part of the juggler's exhibition at fairs. It is generally performed by a female, who, when the music plays, whirls herself round with great swiftness, with two naked swords in each hand, forming with them a great variety of figures ; sometimes holding them over her head, then down by her sides, or behind her, and occasionally thrusting them, apparently, into her bosom. The dance generally continues from five to ten minutes, and when finished, the performer stops suddenly, without appearing to be in the least giddy, from the constant reiteration of the rotatory motion.

## ROPE DANCING.

THE *Rope Dance*, a species of amusement of very ancient date, formed another part of the jocolator's entertainments; and may be traced back as far as the thirteenth century; but whether the dancers then exhibited upon the tight or the slack rope, or upon both, cannot be easily ascertained.

When King Edward VI. passed through the city of London, previous to his coronation, A.D. 1547, he was entertained with a public performance of this kind. A cable was stretched from the battlements of St. Paul's steeple to an anchor made fast a little before the Dean's house gate; and when his majesty approached it, a man, a native of Arragon, came down the cable, head foremost, lying with his breast upon it, and extending his legs

and arms abroad, as if in the act of flying. When he reached the ground, he kissed the king's foot, and after saying certain words to him, he reascended upon the cable till he came over the midst of the church-yard; there, having a cord about him, he played "certain mysteries, as tumbling, and casting one leg from another." Then he tied the end of his cord to the cable, and fastened himself by the right leg, a little above the ankle, and thus suspended himself for a time; after which, having recovered himself, he unloosed the cord, and came down the cable a second time.

This trick was repeated, though probably by another performer, in the reign of Queen Mary; but in a subsequent attempt, Holinshed says, he lost his life. It was also performed by an adventurer, in the reign of

William III. who made a descent from the tower of St. Mary-le-Strand ; and, somewhat more than half a century ago, a similar exploit was put in practice in different parts of the kingdom. An eye-witness, who also assisted in adjusting the apparatus, thus describes the performance : “ A rope was stretched from the top of the tower of All Saints’ church (Hertford), and brought obliquely to the ground, about fourscore yards from the bottom of the tower, where, being drawn over two strong pieces of wood nailed across each other, it was made fast to a stake driven into the earth ; two or three feather beds were then placed upon the cross timbers, to receive the performer when he descended, and to break his fall. He was also provided with a flat board, having a groove in the midst of it, which he attached to his breast ; and when he



intended to exhibit, he laid himself upon the top of the rope, with his head downwards, and adjusted the groove to the rope, his legs being held by a person appointed for that purpose, till he had properly balanced himself. He was then liberated, and descended with incredible swiftness from the top of the tower to the feather beds, which prevented his reaching the ground." This man had lost one of his legs, and its place was supplied by a wooden one, which, on this occasion was furnished with a quantity of lead sufficient to counterpoise the weight of the other. He performed the feat three times in the same day: the first time, he descended with his hands empty; the second time he held a trumpet, which he sounded as he passed down; and the third, he had a pistol in each hand, which he discharged in the course of his passage.

## TRAMPOLINE FEATS.

DANCING on one foot was exhibited by the Saxon gleemen, and probably by the Norman minstrels, but more especially by the female dancers, who might thereby acquire the name of *Hoppesteres*, which is given them by Chaucer.

The *Egg Dance* is of considerable antiquity, and is still among the performances of the modern itinerant showmen. At first, it seems to have consisted in simply hopping round a single egg ; but afterwards a number of eggs, to the number of twelve, were placed at certain distances upon the stage, and the dancer, blindfolded, went through the evolutions of a hornpipe jig among them, without touching one of them.

The *Ladder Dance*, a celebrated feat of the

joculator, consisted in the performer standing upon a ladder, which he shifted from place to place, ascending or descending, without losing his equilibrium.

Most of the ancient dances were of a jocular kind, and sometimes executed by one person. In the reign of Edward II. a man danced before the king upon a table, and so pleased his majesty, that he was rewarded with a gratuity of fifty shillings. This dance probably consisted of quaint attitudes and ridiculous gesticulations.

*Wire Dancing*, or rather *balancing upon the wire*, consisted of various feats of balancing, in which the performer sat, stood, lay, or walked, upon a slack wire, which, to give the greater air of difficulty to the execution, was swung backwards and forwards during the perform-

ance. The swinging, however, gave the actor a better opportunity of keeping his equipoise.

There are certain feats of tumbling and vaulting, that have no connection with dancing; such as leaping and turning with the heels over the head in the air, which is called the *Somervault*, or, corruptly, the *Somerset*; also turning over backwards with great rapidity, alternately bearing upon the hands and the feet, denominated the *Fly-flap*; and leaping through barrels without heads, and through hoops, especially the latter, which is an exploit of long standing.

*Balancing* formed a material part of the juggler's profession; as did also the art of the *posture-master*, which consisted in twisting and contorting his body into strange and unnatural attitudes. In a delineation, so old as

the time of Edward III. the performer has bent himself backward, with his head turned up between his hands, so as nearly to touch his feet; and in this situation he hangs by his hams upon a pole supported by two of his confederates. The posture-master is frequently mentioned by the writers of the two last centuries; but his tricks are not particularized. In the present day, these performances are not fashionable, but seem to excite disgust rather than admiration in the public mind; and for this reason they are rarely exhibited.

## MOUNTEBANKS.

The *Mountebank*, who united the professions of jocolator and physician, was of ancient date, and, during the last two centuries, figured away in England with considerable success. He appeared upon a temporary stage, and

prefaced the vending of his medicines with a pompous harangue ; and, the better to attract the notice of the gaping spectators, he displayed some of the performances practised by jugglers, whilst his inseparable companion, the *bourdour*, or merry-andrew, exhibited numerous tricks of vaulting, jumping, or contortions of the body, to put the populace in a good humour, and induce them to purchase the nostrums of his principal.

## TINKERS.

ANOTHER itinerant, who seems in some degree to have rivalled the lower classes of the jugglers, was the *Tinker*, and he is accordingly included with them and the minstrels in the act of Elizabeth against vagrants. His performances were usually exhibited at fairs, wakes, and other places of public resort, and

consisted in low buffoonery and ludicrous tricks, to engage the attention and move the laughter of the populace. Among his most notable performances were fire-eating, licking out burning firebrands or red-hot pokers with the tongue ; taking melted lead or burning pitch into the mouth ; pretending to eat burning tow, and then drawing it out in ribands, &c.

#### DANCING ANIMALS.

ONE great part of the jocolator's profession was the teaching of bears, apes, horses, dogs, and other animals, to imitate the actions of men, to tumble, dance, and perform a variety of tricks contrary to their nature ; and sometimes he would himself counterfeit the gestures and articulations of the brutes.

In some ancient drawings, we meet with representations of the tutored bear. In one, he







*The tutored Bear. Imitation of a Stag.*

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is lying down, as if dead, at the command of his master; a man playing upon two flageolets, standing upon one leg and holding up the other, but supported by a crutch placed under his arm-pit, is enlivening the exhibition, while another is dancing in a ludicrous posture.

Apes and monkeys seem always to have been favourite actors in the jocolator's troop of animals. In recent times, and probably in more ancient times also, these facetious mimics of mankind have been taught to vault and dance upon the rope, and to perform the part of balance-masters.

A learned horse is still to be seen at most fairs; but the feats he performs are by no means equal to what is recorded of one which was exhibited by the jocolators in the thirteenth century. It is said of this horse, that

he danced upon the rope. Oxen also were rendered so docile as to ride upon horses, holding trumpets to their mouths as though they were sounding them.

Horses are exceedingly susceptible of instruction ; and their performances, down to the present time, have been so far extended as to bear the appearance of rational discernment.

The sagacity and docility of dogs also seem naturally to have led to their being included among the brute actors of the jocolator's exhibition. Dancing dogs still, occasionally, appear in the streets of the metropolis ; but their masters meet with very little encouragement, except from the lower classes of the people, and from children.

## ANIMALS COUNTERFEITED.

THE practice of assuming the forms of different animals, and counterfeiting their gestures, is of very ancient date, and probably formed part of the Roman *Saturnalia*. This whimsical amusement, which was very popular, was continued in practice long after the establishment of Christianity; and from it may be traced the *Court Ludi*, or *Mummeries*, already spoken of, the imitations of the itinerant jocolator, and the modern masquerade.

The *savage men*, or *wodehouses*, as they are sometimes called, frequently made their appearance in the public shows; they were sometimes clothed entirely with skins, and sometimes they were decorated with oaken leaves, or covered with ivy.

The joculars and minstrels, observing how highly these ridiculous disguisements were relished by the people, turned their talents towards the imitating of different animals, and rendered their exhibitions more pleasing by the addition of their new acquirements. Among the ancient specimens of these performances, we meet with one under the resemblance of a stag; and another under that of a goat, walking erect on his hinder feet. Neither of these fictitious animals has any fore legs; but to the first the deficiency is supplied by a staff, upon which the enclosed actor might recline at pleasure; his face is seen through an aperture on the breast; and, probably, a person was chosen to perform this part with a physiognomy susceptible of much grimace, which he had an opportunity of setting forth to the greatest advantage, with a

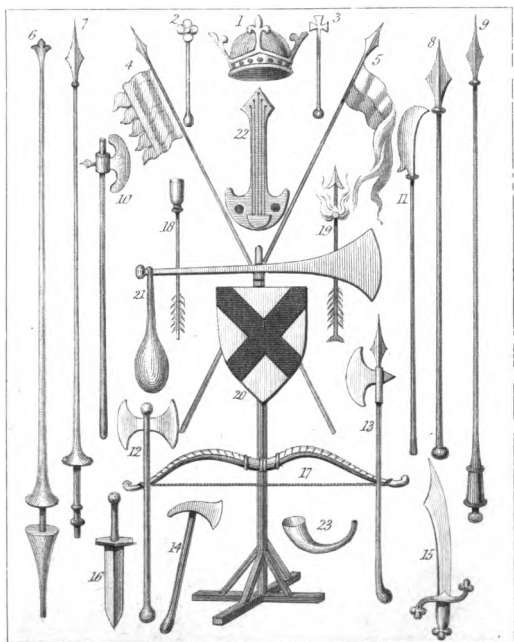
certainty of commanding the plaudits of his beholders.

The prancing and curvetting of horses was counterfeited in the *Hobby Horse*, which seems latterly to have been almost inseparable from the morrice-dance. It consisted of a compound figure: the head and tail of the horse, with a light wooden frame for the body, was attached to the person who was to perform the two-fold character, covered with trappings reaching to the ground, so as to conceal the feet of the actor, and prevent the discovery that the supposed horse had none. Thus equipped, he pranced about, imitating the curvettings and motions of a horse. This species of amusement was in such high repute, that Prince Henry, eldest son of James I. did not disdain to use it.

## ANCIENT ARMS, &amp;c.

## EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII.

1. Crown; copied from the seal of William the Conqueror. It seems to have consisted of an iron cap, or helmet, surrounded with a coronet.
- 2, 3. Sceptres; probably little more than iron maces, or clubs.
4. Banner, with the chief's insignia.
5. Pennon, used by knights. It was a small streamer attached to their spears, or lances.
6. Blunt Lance, used in tilts and tournaments.
7. Burdare, or Tilting Lance, used by the cavalry.
8. Gaveloe, or Javelin, used by the infantry.
9. Long Spear, used by the light-armed infantry, to annoy the enemy's cavalry.
10. Gisarma, a kind of battle-axe, used by the Normans.
11. Bill, another species of battle-axe, used in the English period.



*Ancient Arms, &c.*





12. Bipennis, or double-edged battle-axe. With a weapon of this kind, Stephen, when fighting for his kingdom against the Empress Maud, withstood his enemies alone, beating down all who attacked him, till it broke with the weight of his blows.
13. Battle-axe, or Halberd, much in use among the Danes, who are sometimes called the inventors of it. See page 25.
14. Pole-axe, having an axe on one side, and a sharp spike on the other.
15. Falchion.
16. Cultellum, a sort of dagger, or short sword, used by the Danes and Normans.
17. Long Bow ; in the use of which the English archers were peculiarly expert.
18. Arrow, charged with a phial of quick-lime, to be shot into the enemy's ships.
19. Arrow, charged with combustibles, to be shot, on fire, into towns or castles ; or, in sea fights, for burning the rigging of ships.

## **256      EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII.**

- 20. Pavisse, or Shield, large enough to cover the whole body. In the English period the pavissers were chiefly employed in scaling walls of besieged places.**
- 21. Quintain, described at page 40.**
- 22. Musical Instrument, of the lyre, or guitar kind.**
- 23. Bugle, or Huntsman's Horn, used by the Danes to call the soldiers to arms. See page 26.**

**THE END.**

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